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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

APPLICATION FEE TRANSMITTALASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

Transmitted herewith for filing is the patent application of

Inventor(s): Suzanne U. Emerson, Robert H. Purcell, Sergei A. Tsarev and Robin A. RobinsonFor: RECOMBINANT PROTEINS OF A PAKISTANI STRAIN OF HEPATITIS E AND
THEIR USE IN DIAGNOSTIC METHODS AND VACCINES

Enclosed are:

- ☒ 114 page(s) of specification
- ☒ 1 page(s) of Abstract
- ☒ 3 page(s) of claims
- ☒ 37 sheets of drawing [] formal [X] informal
- ☒ 3 page(s) of Combined Declaration and Power of Attorney (unsigned)
- [] _____ page(s) of Sequence Listing
- [] _____ computer disk(s) containing Sequence Listing
- [] _____ statement under 37 C.F.R. § 1.821(f) that computer and paper copies of the Sequence Listing are the same
- [] A check in the amount of \$_____ to cover the application filing fee For Other Than A Small Entity as determined in the Part I Calculation of Fees below.
- [] Verified Statement of "Small Entity" Status Under 37 C.F.R. §1.27 Filed _____.
- [] A check in the amount of \$_____ to cover the application filing fee for A Small Entity as determined in the Part II Calculation of Fees below.
- [] An assignment of the invention to _____.
- [] A check in the amount of \$40.00 for recording the Assignment.

AUTHORIZATION TO CHARGE DEPOSIT ACCOUNT

- [X] Charge Fee to Deposit Account No. 13-4500. Order No. 2026-4255. A DUPLICATE COPY OF THIS SHEET IS ATTACHED.
- [X] The Assistant Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required for filing this application, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 13-4500. Order No. 2026-4255. A DUPLICATE COPY OF THIS SHEET IS ATTACHED.

I. CALCULATION OF APPLICATION FEE (For Other Than A Small Entity)

						Basic Fee
		Number Filed	Number Extra		Rate	\$ 770.00
Total						
Claims		43	-20=	22	x \$22.00	\$ 506.00
Independent						
Claims		4	- 3=	1	x \$80.00	\$ 80.00
Multiple	[X] yes	Add'l Fee \$260.00				
Dependent						
Claim(s)	[] no	Add'l Fee NONE				
						= \$ 260.00
Total:						\$1,616.00

II. CALCULATION OF APPLICATION FEE (For A Small Entity)

H. CALCULATION OF APPLICATION FEE (FOR FORMAL ENTRY)					Basic Fee
	Number Filed		Number Extra	Rate	\$385.00
Total* Claims	-20=		x	\$11.00	\$
Independent Claims	- 3=		x	\$40.00	\$
Multiple Dependent Claim(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	Add'l Fee \$130.00			
	<input type="checkbox"/> no	Add'l Fee NONE			= \$
Total:					\$

Respectfully submitted,

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* Includes all independent and single dependent claims and all claims referred to in multiple dependent claims. See 37 C.F.R. § 1.75(c).

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Applicant(s) : Emerson, S.U. et al. Group Art Unit: To Be Assigned
Serial No. : 07/169,033 Examiner: To Be Assigned
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For : RECOMBINANT PROTEINS OF A PAKISTANI STRAIN
OF HEPATITIS E AND THEIR USE IN DIAGNOSTIC
METHODS AND VACCINES

EXPRESS MAIL CERTIFICATE

Express Mail Label No. EI004875185US

Date of Deposit April 11, 1997

I hereby certify that the following attached paper(s) or fee

1. Parent Application as filed (114 pages of specification; 3 pages of claims; 1 page of abstract; 37 pages of drawings;
2. Application Fee Transmittal;
3. Unsigned Combined Declaration and Power of Attorney; and
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is being deposited with the United States Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service under 37 C.F.R. §1.10 on the date indicated above and is addressed to the Assistant Commissioner for Patents, BOX PATENT APPLICATION, Washington, D.C. 20231.

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papers or fee)

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- 1 -

Title of the Invention

RECOMBINANT PROTEINS
OF A PAKISTANI STRAIN OF
HEPATITIS E AND THEIR USE IN
DIAGNOSTIC METHODS AND VACCINES

Field Of Invention

The invention is in the field of hepatitis virology. More specifically, this invention relates to recombinant proteins derived from an enterically transmitted strain of hepatitis E from Pakistan, SAR-55, and to diagnostic methods and vaccine applications which employ these proteins.

Background of Invention

Epidemics of hepatitis E, an enterically transmitted non-A/non-B hepatitis, have been reported in Asia, Africa and Central America (Balayan, M.S. (1987), Soviet Medical Reviews, Section E, Virology Reviews, Zhdanov, O-V.M. (ed), Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, vol. 2, 235-261; Purcell, R.G., et al. (1988) in Zuckerman, A.J. (ed), "Viral Hepatitis and Liver Disease", New York: Alan R. Liss, 131-137; Bradley, D.W. (1990), British Medical Bulletin, 46:442-461; Ticehurst, J.R. (1991) in Hollinger, F.B., Lemon, S.M., Margolis, H.S. (eds): "Viral Hepatitis and Liver Disease", Williams and Wilkins, Baltimore, 501-513). Cases of sporadic hepatitis, presumed to be hepatitis E, account for up to 90% of reported hepatitis in countries where hepatitis E virus (HEV) is endemic. The need for development of a serological test for the detection of anti-HEV antibodies in the sera of infected individuals is widely recognized in the field, but the very low concentration of HEV excreted from infected humans or animals made it impossible to use such HEV as the source of antigen for serological tests and although limited success was reported in propagation of HEV in cell culture (Huang, R.T. et al. (1992), J. Gen. Virol., 73:1143-1148), cell culture is currently too

- ° inefficient to produce the amounts of antigen required for serological tests.

Recently, major efforts worldwide to identify viral genomic sequences associated with hepatitis E have resulted in the cloning of the genomes of a limited number of strains of HEV (Tam, A.W. et al. (1991), Virology, 185:120-131; Tsarev, S.A. et al. (1992), Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA, 89:559-563; Fry, K.E. et al. (1992), Virus Genes, 6:173-185). Analysis of the DNA sequences have led investigators to hypothesize that the HEV genome is organized into three open reading frames (ORFs) and to hypothesize that these ORFs encode intact HEV proteins.

A partial DNA sequence of the genome of an HEV strain from Burma (Myanmar) is disclosed in Reyes et al., 1990, Science, 247:1335-1339. Tam et al., 1991, and Reyes et al., PCT Patent Application WO91/15603 published October 17, 1991 disclose the complete nucleotide sequence and a deduced amino acid sequence of the Burma strain of HEV. These authors hypothesized that three forward open reading frames (ORFs) are contained within the sequence of this strain.

Ichikawa et al., 1991, Microbiol. Immunol., 35:535-543, discloses the isolation of a series of clones of 240-320 nucleotides in length upon the screening of a λ gt11 expression library with sera from HEV-infected cynomolgus monkeys. The recombinant protein expressed by one clone was expressed in E. coli. This fusion protein is encoded by the 3' region of ORF-2 of the Myanmar strain of HEV.

The expression of additional proteins encoded within the 3' region of ORF-2 of a Mexican strain of HEV and of a Burmese strain of HEV is described in Yarbough et al., 1991 J. Virology, 65:5790-5797. This article describes the isolation of two cDNA clones derived from HEV. These clones encode the proteins in the 3' region of ORF-2. The clones were expressed in E. coli as fusion proteins.

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Purdy et al., 1992, Archives of Virology, 123:335-349, and Favorov et al., 1992, J. of Medical Virology, 36:246-250, disclose the expression of a larger ORF-2 protein fragment from the Burma strain in E. coli. These references, as well as those previously discussed, only disclose the expression of a portion of the ORF-2 gene using bacterial expression systems. Successful expression of the full-length ORF-2 protein has not been disclosed until the present invention.

Comparison of the genome organization and morphological structure of HEV is most closely related to the caliciviruses. Of interest, the structural proteins of caliciviruses are encoded by the 3' portion of their genome (Neil, J.d. et al. (1991) J. Virol., 65:5440-5447; and Carter, M.J. et al. (1992), J. Arch. Virol., 122:223-235) and although there is no direct evidence that the 3' terminal part of the HEV genome also encodes the structural proteins, expression of certain small portions of the 3' genome region in bacterial cells resulted in production of proteins reactive with anti-HEV sera in ELISA and Western blots (Yarborough, et al., (1991); Ichikawa et al. (1991); Favorov et al. (1992) and Dawson, G.J. et al. (1992) J. Virol Meth; 38:175-186). However, the function of ORF-2 protein as a structural protein was not proven until the present invention.

The small proteins encoded by a portion of the ORF-2 gene have been used in immunoassay to detect antibodies to HEV in animal sera. The use of small bacterially expressed proteins as antigens in serological immunoassays has several potential drawbacks. first, the expression of these small proteins in bacterial cells of results in solubility problems and in non-specific cross-reactivity of patients' sera with E. coli proteins when crude E. coli lysates are used as antigens in immunoassays (Purdy et al. (1992)). Second, the use of Western blots as a first-line serological test for anti-HEV antibodies in

0 routine epidemiology is impractical due to time and cost constraints. An ELISA using small-peptides derived from the 3'-terminal part of the HEV genome resulted in the detection of only 41% positives from known HEV-infected patients. Third, it has been shown that for many viruses, including
5 *Picornaviridae*, important antigenic and immunogenic epitopes are highly conformation (Lemon, S.M. et al. (1991), in Hollinger, F.B., Lemon, S.M., Margolis, H.S. (eds): "Viral Hepatitis and Liver disease", Williams and Wilkins, Baltimore, 20-24). For this reason, it is believed that
10 expression in a eukaryotic system of a complete ORF encoding an intact HEV gene would result in production of a protein which could form HEV-virus-like particles. Such a complete ORF protein would have an immunological structure closer to that of native capsid protein(s) than would the above-noted
15 smaller proteins which represent only portions of the structural proteins of HEV. Therefore, these complete ORF proteins would likely serve as a more representative antigen and a more efficient immunogen than the currently-used smaller proteins.

20 Summary Of Invention

The present invention relates to an isolated and substantially pure preparation of a human hepatitis E viral strain SAR-55.

25 The invention also relates to an isolated and substantially pure preparation of the genomic RNA of the human hepatitis E viral strain SAR-55.

The invention further relates to the cDNA of the human hepatitis E viral strain SAR-55.

30 It is an object of this invention to provide synthetic nucleic acid sequences capable of directing production of recombinant HEV proteins, as well as equivalent natural nucleic acid sequences. Such natural nucleic acid sequences may be isolated from a cDNA or genomic library from which the gene capable of directing
35 synthesis of the HEV proteins may be identified and

° isolated. For purpose of this application, nucleic acid sequence refers to RNA, DNA, cDNA or any synthetic variant thereof which encodes for protein.

The invention further relates to a method for detection of the hepatitis E virus in biological samples
5 based on selective amplification of hepatitis E gene fragments utilizing primers derived from the SAR-55 cDNA.

The invention also relates to the use of single-stranded antisense poly-or oligonucleotides derived from the SAR-55 cDNA to inhibit the expression of hepatitis E genes.

10 The invention also relates to isolated and substantially purified HEV proteins and variants thereof encoded by the HEV genome of SAR-55 or encoded by synthetic nucleic acid sequences and in particular to recombinant proteins encoded by an open reading frame 2 sequence of HEV.

15 The invention also relates to the method of preparing recombinant HEV proteins derived from an HEV genomic sequence by cloning the nucleic acid and inserting the cDNA into an expression vector and expressing the recombinant protein in a host cell.

20 The invention also relates to the use of the resultant recombinant HEV proteins as diagnostic agents and as vaccines.

The present invention also encompasses methods of detecting antibodies specific for hepatitis E virus in
25 biological samples. Such methods are useful for diagnosis of infection and disease caused by HEV, and for monitoring the progression of such disease. Such methods are also useful for monitoring the efficacy of therapeutic agents during the course of treatment of HEV infection and disease
30 in a mammal.

This invention also relates to pharmaceutical compositions for use in prevention or treatment of Hepatitis E in a mammal.

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Description Of Figures

Figure 1 shows the recombinant vector used to express the complete ORF-2 protein of the genome of HEV strain SAR-55.

Figures 2A and 2B are sodium dodecyl sulfate-polyacrylamide gels (SDS-PAGE) in which cell lysates of insect cells infected with wild-type baculovirus or recombinant baculovirus (containing the gene encoding ORF-2) were either stained with Coomassie blue (A) or subjected to Western blotting with serum of an HEV-infected chimp (B). In both Figures 2A and 2B, lane 1 contains total cell lysate of noninfected SF-9 cells; lane 2 contains lysate of cells infected with wild-type baculovirus; lane 3 contains lysate of cells infected with recombinant baculovirus and lane 4 contains molecular weight markers.

Figures 3A and 3B show immunoelectron micrographs (IEM) of 30 and 20 nm virus-like particles respectively, which are formed as a result of the expression of ORF-2 protein in recombinantly infected insect cells.

Figure 4 shows the results of an ELISA using as the antigen, recombinant ORF-2 which was expressed from insect cells containing the gene encoding the complete ORF-2. Serum anti-HEV antibody levels were determined at various times following inoculation of cynomolgus monkeys with either the Mexican (Cyno-80A82, Cyno-9A97 and Cyno 83) or Pakistani (Cyno-374) strains of HEV.

Figures 5A-D show the results of an ELISA using as the antigen, recombinant ORF-2 which was expressed from insect cells containing the gene encoding the complete ORF-2. Serum IgG or IgM anti-HEV levels were determined over time following inoculation of two chimpanzees with HEV.

Figures 6A-J show a comparison of ELISA data obtained using as the antigen the recombinant complete ORF-2 protein derived from SAR-55 as the antigen vs. a recombinant partial ORF-2 protein derived from the Burma strain of HEV (Genelabs).

Figures 7A-J show anti-HEV IgG ELISA and alanine aminotransferase (ALT) values for cynomolgus monkeys inoculated with ten-fold serial dilutions (indicated in parenthesis at the top of each panel) of a 10% fecal suspension of SAR-55 HEV. Recombinant antigens used in ELISA were: glutathione-S-transferase (GST); 3-2(M), a fusion of the 3-2 epitope [Yarbough et al., (1991) J. Virol, 65:5790-5797] and GST; SG3 (B), a fusion of 327 C-terminal amino acids of ORF-2 and GST [Yarbough et al., (1993): Assay Development of diagnostic tests for Hepatitis E in "International Symposium on Viral Hepatitis and Liver Disease. Scientific Program and Abstract Volume." Tokyo:VHFL p. 87]; and a 55 kDa ORF-2 product directly expressed in insect cells.

Figures 8A-E show anti-HEV IgM ELISA and ALT values for positive cynomolgus monkeys inoculated with ten-fold serial dilutions (indicated in parenthesis at the top of each panel) of the 10% fecal suspension of SAR-55 HEV. Recombinant antigens used in ELISA were: glutathione-S-transferase (GST); 3-2(M), a fusion of the 3-2 epitope [Yarbough et al., 1991] and (GST); SG3 (B), a fusion of 327 C-terminal amino acids of ORF-2 and GST [Yarbough et al., 1993]; and the 55 kDa ORF-2 product directly expressed in insect cells.

Figure 9 shows an ethidium bromide stain of a 2% agarose gel on which PCR products produced from extracts of serial ten-fold dilutions (indicated at the top of each lane of the gel) of the 10% fecal suspension of the SAR-55 HEV were separated. The predicted length of the PCR products was about 640 base pairs and the column marked with an (M) contains DNA size markers.

Figure 10 shows the pPIC9 vector used to express the complete ORF-2 protein or lower molecular weight fragments in yeast.

Figure 11 shows the schematic organization of the hepatitis E virus (HEV) genome and recombinant baculoviruses

- ° encoding full-length (bHEV ORF2 fl) and truncated HEV ORF2 (bHEV ORF2 5' tr and bHEV ORF2 5'-3' tr) capsid genes.

Figures 12A and 12B show the temporal protein expression of recombinant baculovirus encoding the HEV ORF2 full-length gene. Sf-9 insect cells were infected at a multiplicity of infection (MOI) = 5 with bHEV ORF2 fl virus. Infected cells and media supernatants were harvested daily over the four day infection. Cell lysates and media supernatants were fractionated by SDS-PAGE on 8 - 16% protein gradient gels and stained with colloidal Coomassie blue dye (Figure 12A). Proteins from duplicate protein gels were transferred onto nitrocellulose membranes by electroblotting and HEV proteins were detected chromogenically by antibody binding (Figure 12B) to primary chimp antisera to HEV (1:500) followed by secondary goat antisera human IgG2 - alkaline phosphatase (1:5000). Lane 1, Sea-blue molecular weight markers; lane 2, mock-infected cells; lane 3, 1 day postinfection (p.i.) cells; lane 4, 2 days p.i. cells; lane 5, 3 days p.i. cells; lane 5, 4 days p.i. cells; lane 6, Sea-blue protein MW markers; lane 7, mock-infected supernatant; lane 8, 1 day p.i. supernatant; lane 9, 2 days p.i. supernatant; 3 days p.i. supernatant; lane 10, 4 days p.i. supernatant. Lane assignments are similar for panels A and B.

Figure 13A-13C shows protein chromatography elution profiles of cell lysates from bHEV ORF2 fl virus infected insect cells. Figure 13A shows the protein elution profile from anion exchange chromatography on a Q Sepharose Fast Flow strong anion exchange column using 0 - 300 mM linear NaCl gradient in Q loading buffer. Figure 13B shows the protein elution profile of HEV 55 kD protein from peak Q fractions on SOURCE 15 Q High Performance strong anion exchange column using 0 - 300 mM linear NaCl gradient in Q loading buffer. Figure 13C shows the elution profile of pooled fractions from SOURCE 15 Q chromatography which contained the 55 kD

- ° protein and which were then subjected to gel filtration on a Sephacryl S 200 column.

Figure 14 shows SDS-PAGE and Western blot results of HEV 55 kD protein contained in gel filtration fractions from a Sephacryl G 200 column. Pooled fractions containing the 55 kD protein from SOURCE 15 Q chromatography of cell lysates were subjected to gel filtration on a Sephacryl S-200 column. Aliquots from selected column fractions were subjected to SDS-PAGE and Western blot analyses (lower panel) or to a Coomassie blue-stained 8 - 20% NOVEX gradient gel (upper panel). HEV proteins were detected by Western blot with convalescent antisera from HEV-infected chimps. Lane 1, Sea-Blue protein molecular weight markers; lane 2, pooled Q fractions; lanes 3 - 12, gel filtration fractions.

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Figure 15 shows the Lys C digestion peptide profile of recombinant HEV ORF2 kD protein purified from cell lysates from Sf-9 insect cells infected with bHEV ORF2 fl virus.

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Figure 16 shows the results of carboxyl terminal amino acid analysis of recombinant HEV ORF2 55 kD proteins purified from cell lysates from Sf-9 insect cells infected with bHEV ORF2 fl virus.

25

Figure 17 shows the electrospray mass spectroscopy profile of the recombinant HEV 55 kD protein purified from cell lysates from Sf-9 insect cells infected with bHEV ORF2 fl virus..

30

Figures 18A and 18B show the temporal protein expression of recombinant baculoviruses encoding HEV ORF2 genes. Sf-9 insect cells were infected at an MOI = 5 with bHEV ORF2 5' tr or 5'-3' tr viruses for four days p.i. Infected cells and media supernatants were harvested daily over the four day

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infection and analyzed as described in the legend to Figure 12. Figures 18A and B show SDS-PAGE (lanes 1 -5) and Western blot (lanes 6 - 10) results of cell-associated proteins from bHEV ORF2 5' tr (Figure 18A) and 5'-3' tr (Figure 18B) virus infections, respectively. Figures 18C and D show SDS-PAGE (lanes 1 -5) and Western blot (lanes 6 -10) results of secreted proteins from bHEV ORF2 5' tr (Figure 18C) and 5'-3' tr (Figure 18D) virus infections, respectively. Lanes 1 and 6, mock-infected cells; lanes 2 and 7, 1 day p.i. cells; lanes 3 and 8, 2 days p.i. cells; lanes 4 and 9, 3 days p.i. cells; and lanes 5 and 10, 4 days p.i. cells.

Sea-blue protein MW markers were used to determine the molecular weight of indicated proteins. Anti-HEV antibody from chimpanzees infected with live HEV was used to detect HEV proteins in Western blots.

Detailed Description of Invention

The present invention relates to an isolated and substantially purified strain of hepatitis E virus (HEV) from Pakistan, SAR-55. The present invention also relates to the cloning of the viral genes encoding proteins of HEV and the expression of the recombinant proteins using an expression system. More specifically, the present invention relates to the cloning and expression of the open reading frames (ORF) of HEV derived from SAR-55.

The present invention relates to isolated HEV proteins. Preferably, the HEV proteins of the present invention are substantially homologous to, and most preferably biologically equivalent to, the native HEV proteins. By "biologically equivalent" as used throughout the specification and claims, it is meant that the compositions are antigenic and/or immunogenic. The HEV proteins of the present invention may also stimulate the production of protective antibodies upon injection into a mammal that would serve to protect the mammal upon challenge with a

° wild-type HEV. By "substantially homologous" as used throughout the ensuing specification and claims, is meant a degree of homology in the amino acid sequence to the native HEV proteins. Preferably the degree of homology is in excess of 70%, preferably in excess of 90%, with a particularly preferred group of proteins being in excess of 99% homologous with the native HEV proteins over the region of comparison between the two proteins.

Preferred HEV proteins are those proteins that are encoded by the ORF genes. Of particular interest are proteins encoded by the ORF-2 gene of HEV and most particularly proteins encoded by the ORF-2 gene of the SAR-55 strain of HEV. The amino acid sequences of the ORF-1, ORF-2 and ORF-3 proteins are shown below as SEQ ID NO.: 1, SEQ ID NO.: 2, and SEQ ID NO.: 3, respectively:

(SEQ. ID NO.: 1)

15	Met	Glu	Ala	His	Gln	Phe	Ile	Lys	Ala	Pro	Gly	Ile	Thr	Thr	Ala
	1				5					10					15
	Ile	Glu	Gln	Ala	Ala	Leu	Ala	Ala	Ala	Asn	Ser	Ala	Leu	Ala	Asn
					20					25					30
	Ala	Val	Val	Val	Arg	Pro	Phe	Leu	Ser	His	Gln	Gln	Ile	Glu	Ile
					35					40					45
20	Leu	Ile	Asn	Leu	Met	Gln	Pro	Arg	Gln	Leu	Val	Phe	Arg	Pro	Glu
					50					55					60
	Val	Phe	Trp	Asn	His	Pro	Ile	Gln	Arg	Val	Ile	His	Asn	Glu	Leu
					65					70					75
	Glu	Leu	Tyr	Cys	Arg	Ala	Arg	Ser	Gly	Arg	Cys	Leu	Glu	Ile	Gly
					80					85					90
	Ala	His	Pro	Arg	Ser	Ile	Asn	Asp	Asn	Pro	Asn	Val	Val	His	Arg
					95					100					105
25	Cys	Phe	Leu	Arg	Pro	Ala	Gly	Arg	Asp	Val	Gln	Arg	Trp	Tyr	Thr
					110					115					120
	Ala	Pro	Thr	Arg	Gly	Pro	Ala	Ala	Asn	Cys	Arg	Arg	Ser	Ala	Leu
					125					130					135
	Arg	Gly	Leu	Pro	Ala	Ala	Asp	Arg	Thr	Tyr	Cys	Phe	Asp	Gly	Phe
					140					145					150
	Ser	Gly	Cys	Asn	Phe	Pro	Ala	Glu	Thr	Gly	Ile	Ala	Leu	Tyr	Ser
					155					160					165
30	Leu	His	Asp	Met	Ser	Pro	Ser	Asp	Val	Ala	Glu	Ala	Met	Phe	Arg
					170					175					180
	His	Gly	Met	Thr	Arg	Leu	Tyr	Ala	Ala	Leu	His	Leu	Pro	Pro	Glu
					185					190					195
	Val	Leu	Leu	Pro	Pro	Gly	Thr	Tyr	Arg	Thr	Ala	Ser	Tyr	Leu	Leu
					200					205					210
35	Ile	His	Asp	Gly	Arg	Arg	Val	Val	Val	Thr	Tyr	Glu	Gly	Asp	Thr

0					215					220					225
	Ser	Ala	Gly	Tyr	Asn	His	Asp	Val	Ser	Asn	Leu	Arg	Ser	Trp	Ile
					230					235					240
	Arg	Thr	Thr	Lys	Val	Thr	Gly	Asp	His	Pro	Leu	Val	Ile	Glu	Arg
					245					250					255
	Val	Arg	Ala	Ile	Gly	Cys	His	Phe	Val	Leu	Leu	Leu	Thr	Ala	Ala
					260					265					270
5	Pro	Glu	Pro	Ser	Pro	Met	Pro	Tyr	Val	Pro	Tyr	Pro	Arg	Ser	Thr
					275					280					285
	Glu	Val	Tyr	Val	Arg	Ser	Ile	Phe	Gly	Pro	Gly	Gly	Thr	Pro	Ser
					290					295					300
	Leu	Phe	Pro	Thr	Ser	Cys	Ser	Thr	Lys	Ser	Thr	Phe	His	Ala	Val
					305					310					315
	Pro	Ala	His	Ile	Trp	Asp	Arg	Leu	Met	Leu	Phe	Gly	Ala	Thr	Leu
					320					325					330
10	Asp	Asp	Gln	Ala	Phe	Cys	Cys	Ser	Arg	Leu	Met	Thr	Tyr	Leu	Arg
					335					340					345
	Gly	Ile	Ser	Tyr	Lys	Val	Thr	Val	Gly	Thr	Leu	Val	Ala	Asn	Glu
					350					355					360
	Gly	Trp	Asn	Ala	Ser	Glu	Asp	Ala	Leu	Thr	Ala	Val	Ile	Thr	Ala
					365					370					375
	Ala	Tyr	Leu	Thr	Ile	Cys	His	Gln	Arg	Tyr	Leu	Arg	Thr	Gln	Ala
					380					385					390
15	Ile	Ser	Lys	Gly	Met	Arg	Arg	Leu	Glu	Arg	Glu	His	Ala	Gln	Lys
					395					400					405
	Phe	Ile	Thr	Arg	Leu	Tyr	Ser	Trp	Leu	Phe	Glu	Lys	Ser	Gly	Arg
					410					415					420
	Asp	Tyr	Ile	Pro	Gly	Arg	Gln	Leu	Glu	Phe	Tyr	Ala	Gln	Cys	Arg
					425					430					435
	Arg	Trp	Leu	Ser	Ala	Gly	Phe	His	Leu	Asp	Pro	Arg	Val	Leu	Val
					440					445					450
20	Phe	Asp	Glu	Ser	Ala	Pro	Cys	His	Cys	Arg	Thr	Ala	Ile	Arg	Lys
					455					460					465
	Ala	Val	Ser	Lys	Phe	Cys	Cys	Phe	Met	Lys	Trp	Leu	Gly	Gln	Glu
					470					475					480
	Cys	Thr	Cys	Phe	Leu	Gln	Pro	Ala	Glu	Gly	Val	Val	Gly	Asp	Gln
					485					490					495
25	Gly	His	Asp	Asn	Glu	Ala	Tyr	Glu	Gly	Ser	Asp	Val	Asp	Pro	Ala
					500					505					510
	Glu	Ser	Ala	Ile	Ser	Asp	Ile	Ser	Gly	Ser	Tyr	Val	Val	Pro	Gly
					515					520					525
	Thr	Ala	Leu	Gln	Pro	Leu	Tyr	Gln	Ala	Leu	Asp	Leu	Pro	Ala	Glu
					530					535					540
	Ile	Val	Ala	Arg	Ala	Gly	Arg	Leu	Thr	Ala	Thr	Val	Lys	Val	Ser
					545					550					555
30	Gln	Val	Asp	Gly	Arg	Ile	Asp	Cys	Glu	Thr	Leu	Leu	Gly	Asn	Lys
					560					565					570
	Thr	Phe	Arg	Thr	Ser	Phe	Val	Asp	Gly	Ala	Val	Leu	Glu	Thr	Asn
					575					580					585
	Gly	Pro	Glu	Arg	His	Asn	Leu	Ser	Phe	Asp	Ala	Ser	Gln	Ser	Thr
					590					595					600
	Met	Ala	Ala	Gly	Pro	Phe	Ser	Leu	Thr	Tyr	Ala	Ala	Ser	Ala	Ala
					605					610					615
35															

°	Gly	Leu	Glu	Val	Arg	Tyr	Val	Ala	Ala	Gly	Leu	Asp	His	Arg	Ala
					620					625					630
	Val	Phe	Ala	Pro	Gly	Val	Ser	Pro	Arg	Ser	Ala	Pro	Gly	Glu	Val
					635					640					645
	Thr	Ala	Phe	Cys	Ser	Ala	Leu	Tyr	Arg	Phe	Asn	Arg	Glu	Ala	Gln
					650					655					660
	Arg	Leu	Ser	Leu	Thr	Gly	Asn	Phe	Trp	Phe	His	Pro	Glu	Gly	Leu
					665					670					675
5	Leu	Gly	Pro	Phe	Ala	Pro	Phe	Ser	Pro	Gly	His	Val	Trp	Glu	Ser
					680					685					690
	Ala	Asn	Pro	Phe	Cys	Gly	Glu	Ser	Thr	Leu	Tyr	Thr	Arg	Thr	Trp
					695					700					705
	Ser	Glu	Val	Asp	Ala	Val	Pro	Ser	Pro	Ala	Gln	Pro	Asp	Leu	Gly
					710					715					720
	Phe	Thr	Ser	Glu	Pro	Ser	Ile	Pro	Ser	Arg	Ala	Ala	Thr	Pro	Thr
					725					730					735
10	Pro	Ala	Ala	Pro	Leu	Pro	Pro	Pro	Ala	Pro	Asp	Pro	Ser	Pro	Thr
					740					745					750
	Leu	Ser	Ala	Pro	Ala	Arg	Gly	Glu	Pro	Ala	Pro	Gly	Ala	Thr	Ala
					755					760					765
	Arg	Ala	Pro	Ala	Ile	Thr	His	Gln	Thr	Ala	Arg	His	Arg	Arg	Leu
					770					775					780
	Leu	Phe	Thr	Tyr	Pro	Asp	Gly	Ser	Lys	Val	Phe	Ala	Gly	Ser	Leu
					785					790					795
15	Phe	Glu	Ser	Thr	Cys	Thr	Trp	Leu	Val	Asn	Ala	Ser	Asn	Val	Asp
					800					805					810
	His	Arg	Pro	Gly	Gly	Gly	Leu	Cys	His	Ala	Phe	Tyr	Gln	Arg	Tyr
					815					820					825
	Pro	Ala	Ser	Phe	Asp	Ala	Ala	Ser	Phe	Val	Met	Arg	Asp	Gly	Ala
					830					835					840
20	Ala	Ala	Tyr	Thr	Leu	Thr	Pro	Arg	Pro	Ile	Ile	His	Ala	Val	Ala
					845					850					855
	Pro	Asp	Tyr	Arg	Leu	Glu	His	Asn	Pro	Lys	Arg	Leu	Glu	Ala	Ala
					860					865					870
	Tyr	Arg	Glu	Thr	Cys	Ser	Arg	Leu	Gly	Thr	Ala	Ala	Tyr	Pro	Leu
					875					880					885
	Leu	Gly	Thr	Gly	Ile	Tyr	Gln	Val	Pro	Ile	Gly	Pro	Ser	Phe	Asp
					890					895					900
25	Ala	Trp	Glu	Arg	Asn	His	Arg	Pro	Gly	Asp	Glu	Leu	Tyr	Leu	Pro
					905					910					915
	Glu	Leu	Ala	Ala	Arg	Trp	Phe	Glu	Ala	Asn	Arg	Pro	Thr	Cys	Pro
					920					925					930
	Thr	Leu	Thr	Ile	Thr	Glu	Asp	Val	Ala	Arg	Thr	Ala	Asn	Leu	Ala
					935					940					945
	Ile	Glu	Leu	Asp	Ser	Ala	Thr	Asp	Val	Gly	Arg	Ala	Cys	Ala	Gly
					950					955					960
30	Cys	Arg	Val	Thr	Pro	Gly	Val	Val	Gln	Tyr	Gln	Phe	Thr	Ala	Gly
					965					970					975
	Val	Pro	Gly	Ser	Gly	Lys	Ser	Arg	Ser	Ile	Thr	Gln	Ala	Asp	Val
					980					985					990
	Asp	Val	Val	Val	Val	Pro	Thr	Arg	Glu	Leu	Arg	Asn	Ala	Trp	Arg
					995					1000					1005
35	Arg	Arg	Gly	Phe	Ala	Ala	Phe	Thr	Pro	His	Thr	Ala	Ala	Arg	Val

0				1010					1015					1020	
	Thr	Gln	Gly	Arg	Arg	Val	Val	Ile	Asp	Glu	Ala	Pro	Ser	Leu	Pro
				1025						1030					1035
	Pro	His	Leu	Leu	Leu	Leu	His	Met	Gln	Arg	Ala	Ala	Thr	Val	His
				1040						1045					1050
	Leu	Leu	Gly	Asp	Pro	Asn	Gln	Ile	Pro	Ala	Ile	Asp	Phe	Glu	His
				1055						1060					1065
5	Ala	Gly	Leu	Val	Pro	Ala	Ile	Arg	Pro	Asp	Leu	Ala	Pro	Thr	Ser
				1070						1075					1080
	Trp	Trp	His	Val	Thr	His	Arg	Cys	Pro	Ala	Asp	Val	Cys	Glu	Leu
				1085						1090					1095
	Ile	Arg	Gly	Ala	Tyr	Pro	Met	Ile	Gln	Thr	Thr	Ser	Arg	Val	Leu
				1100						1105					1110
	Arg	Ser	Leu	Phe	Trp	Gly	Glu	Pro	Ala	Val	Gly	Gln	Lys	Leu	Val
				1115						1120					1125
10	Phe	Thr	Gln	Ala	Ala	Lys	Ala	Ala	Asn	Pro	Gly	Ser	Val	Thr	Val
				1130						1135					1140
	His	Glu	Ala	Gln	Gly	Ala	Thr	Tyr	Thr	Glu	Thr	Thr	Ile	Ile	Ala
				1145						1150					1155
	Thr	Ala	Asp	Ala	Arg	Gly	Leu	Ile	Gln	Ser	Ser	Arg	Ala	His	Ala
				1160						1165					1170
	Ile	Val	Ala	Leu	Thr	Arg	His	Thr	Glu	Lys	Cys	Val	Ile	Ile	Asp
				1175						1180					1185
15	Ala	Pro	Gly	Leu	Leu	Arg	Glu	Val	Gly	Ile	Ser	Asp	Ala	Ile	Val
				1190						1195					1200
	Asn	Asn	Phe	Phe	Leu	Ala	Gly	Gly	Glu	Ile	Gly	His	Gln	Arg	Pro
				1205						1210					1215
	Ser	Val	Ile	Pro	Arg	Gly	Asn	Pro	Asp	Ala	Asn	Val	Asp	Thr	Leu
				1220						1225					1230
	Ala	Ala	Phe	Pro	Pro	Ser	Cys	Glu	Ile	Ser	Ala	Phe	His	Glu	Leu
				1235						1240					1245
20	Ala	Glu	Glu	Leu	Gly	His	Arg	Pro	Ala	Pro	Val	Ala	Ala	Val	Leu
				1250						1255					1260
	Pro	Pro	Cys	Pro	Glu	Leu	Glu	Gln	Gly	Leu	Leu	Tyr	Leu	Pro	Gln
				1265						1270					1275
	Glu	Leu	Thr	Thr	Cys	Asp	Ser	Val	Val	Thr	Phe	Glu	Leu	Thr	Asp
				1280						1285					1290
	Ile	Val	His	Cys	Arg	Met	Ala	Ala	Pro	Ser	Gln	Arg	Lys	Ala	Val
				1295						1300					1305
25	Leu	Ser	Thr	Leu	Val	Gly	Arg	Tyr	Gly	Arg	Arg	Thr	Lys	Leu	Tyr
				1310						1315					1320
	Asn	Ala	Ser	His	Ser	Asp	Val	Arg	Asp	Ser	Leu	Ala	Arg	Phe	Ile
				1325						1330					1335
	Pro	Ala	Ile	Gly	Pro	Val	Gln	Val	Thr	Thr	Cys	Glu	Leu	Tyr	Glu
				1340						1345					1350
30	Leu	Glu	Glu	Ala	Met	Val	Glu	Lys	Gly	Gln	Asp	Gly	Ser	Ala	Val
				1355						1360					1365
	Leu	Glu	Leu	Asp	Leu	Cys	Ser	Arg	Asp	Val	Ser	Arg	Ile	Thr	Phe
				1370						1375					1380
	Phe	Gln	Lys	Asp	Cys	Asn	Lys	Phe	Thr	Thr	Gly	Glu	Thr	Ile	Ala
				1385						1390					1395
	His	Gly	Lys	Val	Gly	Gln	Gly	Ile	Ser	Ala	Trp	Ser	Lys	Thr	Phe
				1400						1405					1410
35															

°	Cys	Ala	Leu	Phe	Gly	Pro	Trp	Phe	Arg	Ala	Ile	Glu	Lys	Ala	Ile	
					1415					1420					1425	
	Leu	Ala	Leu	Leu	Pro	Gln	Gly	Val	Phe	Tyr	Gly	Asp	Ala	Phe	Asp	
					1430					1435					1440	
	Asp	Thr	Val	Phe	Ser	Ala	Ala	Val	Ala	Ala	Ala	Lys	Ala	Ser	Met	
					1445					1450					1455	
	Val	Phe	Glu	Asn	Asp	Phe	Ser	Glu	Phe	Asp	Ser	Thr	Gln	Asn	Asn	
					1460					1465					1470	
5	Phe	Ser	Leu	Gly	Leu	Glu	Cys	Ala	Ile	Met	Glu	Glu	Cys	Gly	Met	
					1475					1480					1485	
	Pro	Gln	Trp	Leu	Ile	Arg	Leu	Tyr	His	Leu	Ile	Arg	Ser	Ala	Trp	
					1490					1495					1500	
	Ile	Leu	Gln	Ala	Pro	Lys	Glu	Ser	Leu	Arg	Gly	Phe	Trp	Lys	Lys	
					1505					1510					1515	
	His	Ser	Gly	Glu	Pro	Gly	Thr	Leu	Leu	Trp	Asn	Thr	Val	Trp	Asn	
					1520					1525					1530	
10	Met	Ala	Val	Ile	Thr	His	Cys	Tyr	Asp	Phe	Arg	Asp	Leu	Gln	Val	
					1535					1540					1545	
	Ala	Ala	Phe	Lys	Gly	Asp	Asp	Ser	Ile	Val	Leu	Cys	Ser	Glu	Tyr	
					1550					1555					1560	
	Arg	Gln	Ser	Pro	Gly	Ala	Ala	Val	Leu	Ile	Ala	Gly	Cys	Gly	Leu	
					1565					1570					1575	
	Lys	Leu	Lys	Val	Asp	Phe	Arg	Pro	Ile	Gly	Leu	Tyr	Ala	Gly	Val	
					1580					1585					1590	
15	Val	Val	Ala	Pro	Gly	Leu	Gly	Ala	Leu	Pro	Asp	Val	Val	Arg	Phe	
					1595					1600					1605	
	Ala	Gly	Arg	Leu	Thr	Glu	Lys	Asn	Trp	Gly	Pro	Gly	Pro	Glu	Arg	
					1610					1615					1620	
	Ala	Glu	Gln	Leu	Arg	Leu	Ala	Val	Ser	Asp	Phe	Leu	Arg	Lys	Leu	
					1625					1630					1635	
20	Thr	Asn	Val	Ala	Gln	Met	Cys	Val	Asp	Val	Val	Ser	Arg	Val	Tyr	
					1640					1645					1650	
	Gly	Val	Ser	Pro	Gly	Leu	Val	His	Asn	Leu	Ile	Glu	Met	Leu	Gln	
					1655					1660					1665	
	Ala	Val	Ala	Asp	Gly	Lys	Ala	His	Phe	Thr	Glu	Ser	Val	Lys	Pro	
					1670					1675					1680	
	Val	Leu	Asp	Leu	Thr	Asn	Ser	Ile	Leu	Cys	Arg	Val	Glu			
					1685					1690						
25																

(SEQ. ID NO.: 2)

	Met	Arg	Pro	Arg	Pro	Ile	Leu	Leu	Leu	Leu	Leu	Met	Phe	Leu	Pro	
	1				5					10					15	
	Met	Leu	Pro	Ala	Pro	Pro	Pro	Gly	Gln	Pro	Ser	Gly	Arg	Arg	Arg	
					20					25					30	
30	Gly	Arg	Arg	Ser	Gly	Gly	Ser	Gly	Gly	Gly	Phe	Trp	Gly	Asp	Arg	
					35					40					45	
	Val	Asp	Ser	Gln	Pro	Phe	Ala	Ile	Pro	Tyr	Ile	His	Pro	Thr	Asn	
					50					55					60	
	Pro	Phe	Ala	Pro	Asp	Val	Thr	Ala	Ala	Ala	Gly	Ala	Gly	Pro	Arg	
					65					70					75	
	Val	Arg	Gln	Pro	Ala	Arg	Pro	Leu	Gly	Ser	Ala	Trp	Arg	Asp	Gln	
35																

0				80					85					90	
	Ala	Gln	Arg	Pro	Ala	Ala	Ala	Ser	Arg	Arg	Arg	Pro	Thr	Thr	Ala
				95						100				105	
	Gly	Ala	Ala	Pro	Leu	Thr	Ala	Val	Ala	Pro	Ala	His	Asp	Thr	Pro
				110						115				120	
	Pro	Val	Pro	Asp	Val	Asp	Ser	Arg	Gly	Ala	Ile	Leu	Arg	Arg	Gln
				125						130				135	
5	Tyr	Asn	Leu	Ser	Thr	Ser	Pro	Leu	Thr	Ser	Ser	Val	Ala	Thr	Gly
				140						145				150	
	Thr	Asn	Leu	Val	Leu	Tyr	Ala	Ala	Pro	Leu	Ser	Pro	Leu	Leu	Pro
				155						160				165	
	Leu	Gln	Asp	Gly	Thr	Asn	Thr	His	Ile	Met	Ala	Thr	Glu	Ala	Ser
				170						175				180	
	Asn	Tyr	Ala	Gln	Tyr	Arg	Val	Ala	Arg	Ala	Thr	Ile	Arg	Tyr	Arg
				185						190				195	
10	Pro	Leu	Val	Pro	Asn	Ala	Val	Gly	Gly	Tyr	Ala	Ile	Ser	Ile	Ser
				200						205				210	
	Phe	Tyr	Pro	Gln	Thr	Thr	Thr	Thr	Pro	Thr	Ser	Val	Asp	Met	Asn
				215						220				225	
	Ser	Ile	Thr	Ser	Thr	Asp	Val	Arg	Ile	Leu	Val	Gln	Pro	Gly	Ile
				230						235				240	
	Ala	Ser	Glu	Leu	Val	Ile	Pro	Ser	Glu	Arg	Leu	His	Tyr	Arg	Asn
				245						250				255	
15	Gln	Gly	Trp	Arg	Ser	Val	Glu	Thr	Ser	Gly	Val	Ala	Glu	Glu	Glu
				260						265				270	
	Ala	Thr	Ser	Gly	Leu	Val	Met	Leu	Cys	Ile	His	Gly	Ser	Pro	Val
				275						280				285	
	Asn	Ser	Tyr	Thr	Asn	Thr	Pro	Tyr	Thr	Gly	Ala	Leu	Gly	Leu	Leu
				290						295				300	
	Asp	Phe	Ala	Leu	Glu	Leu	Glu	Phe	Arg	Asn	Leu	Thr	Pro	Gly	Asn
				305						310				315	
20	Thr	Asn	Thr	Arg	Val	Ser	Arg	Tyr	Ser	Ser	Thr	Ala	Arg	His	Arg
				320						325				330	
	Leu	Arg	Arg	Gly	Ala	Asp	Gly	Thr	Ala	Glu	Leu	Thr	Thr	Thr	Ala
				335						340				345	
	Ala	Thr	Arg	Phe	Met	Lys	Asp	Leu	Tyr	Phe	Thr	Ser	Thr	Asn	Gly
				350						355				360	
25	Val	Gly	Glu	Ile	Gly	Arg	Gly	Ile	Ala	Leu	Thr	Leu	Phe	Asn	Leu
				365						370				375	
	Ala	Asp	Thr	Leu	Leu	Gly	Gly	Leu	Pro	Thr	Glu	Leu	Ile	Ser	Ser
				380						385				390	
	Ala	Gly	Gly	Gln	Leu	Phe	Tyr	Ser	Arg	Pro	Val	Val	Ser	Ala	Asn
				395						400				405	
	Gly	Glu	Pro	Thr	Val	Lys	Leu	Tyr	Thr	Ser	Val	Glu	Asn	Ala	Gln
				410						415				420	
30	Gln	Asp	Lys	Gly	Ile	Ala	Ile	Pro	His	Asp	Ile	Asp	Leu	Gly	Glu
				425						430				435	
	Ser	Arg	Val	Val	Ile	Gln	Asp	Tyr	Asp	Asn	Gln	His	Glu	Gln	Asp
				440						445				450	
	Arg	Pro	Thr	Pro	Ser	Pro	Ala	Pro	Ser	Arg	Pro	Phe	Ser	Val	Leu
				455						460				465	
	Arg	Ala	Asn	Asp	Val	Leu	Trp	Leu	Ser	Leu	Thr	Ala	Ala	Glu	Tyr
				470						475				480	
35															

0	Asp	Gln	Ser	Thr	Tyr	Gly	Ser	Ser	Thr	Gly	Pro	Val	Tyr	Val	Ser
					485					490					495
	Asp	Ser	Val	Thr	Leu	Val	Asn	Val	Ala	Thr	Gly	Ala	Gln	Ala	Val
					500					505					510
	Ala	Arg	Ser	Leu	Asp	Trp	Thr	Lys	Val	Thr	Leu	Asp	Gly	Arg	Pro
					515					520					525
	Leu	Ser	Thr	Ile	Gln	Gln	Tyr	Ser	Lys	Thr	Phe	Phe	Val	Leu	Pro
					530					535					540
5	Leu	Arg	Gly	Lys	Leu	Ser	Phe	Trp	Glu	Ala	Gly	Thr	Thr	Lys	Ala
					545					550					555
	Gly	Tyr	Pro	Tyr	Asn	Tyr	Asn	Thr	Thr	Ala	Ser	Asp	Gln	Leu	Leu
					560					565					570
	Val	Glu	Asn	Ala	Ala	Gly	His	Arg	Val	Ala	Ile	Ser	Thr	Tyr	Thr
					575					580					585
	Thr	Ser	Leu	Gly	Ala	Gly	Pro	Val	Ser	Ile	Ser	Ala	Val	Ala	Val
					590					595					600
10	Leu	Ala	Pro	His	Ser	Val	Leu	Ala	Leu	Leu	Glu	Asp	Thr	Met	Asp
					605					610					615
	Tyr	Pro	Ala	Arg	Ala	His	Thr	Phe	Asp	Asp	Phe	Cys	Pro	Glu	Cys
					620					625					630
	Arg	Pro	Leu	Gly	Leu	Gln	Gly	Cys	Ala	Phe	Gln	Ser	Thr	Val	Ala
					635					640					645
15	Glu	Leu	Gln	Arg	Leu	Lys	Met	Lys	Val	Gly	Lys	Thr	Arg	Glu	Leu
					650					655					660

(SEQ. ID NO.: 3)

	Met	Asn	Asn	Met	Ser	Phe	Ala	Ala	Pro	Met	Gly	Ser	Arg	Pro	Cys
	1				5					10					15
20	Ala	Leu	Gly	Leu	Phe	Cys	Cys	Cys	Ser	Ser	Cys	Phe	Cys	Leu	Cys
					20					25					30
	Cys	Pro	Arg	His	Arg	Pro	Val	Ser	Arg	Leu	Ala	Ala	Val	Val	Gly
					35					40					45
	Gly	Ala	Ala	Ala	Val	Pro	Ala	Val	Val	Ser	Gly	Val	Thr	Gly	Leu
					50					55					60
	Ile	Leu	Ser	Pro	Ser	Gln	Ser	Pro	Ile	Phe	Ile	Gln	Pro	Thr	Pro
					65					70					75
25	Ser	Pro	Pro	Met	Ser	Pro	Leu	Arg	Pro	Gly	Leu	Asp	Leu	Val	Phe
					80					85					90
	Ala	Asn	Pro	Pro	Asp	His	Ser	Ala	Pro	Leu	Gly	Val	Thr	Arg	Pro
					95					100					105
	Ser	Ala	Pro	Pro	Leu	Pro	His	Val	Val	Asp	Leu	Pro	Gln	Leu	Gly
					110					115					120
30	Pro	Arg	Arg												

The three-letter abbreviations follow the conventional amino acid shorthand for the twenty naturally occurring amino acids.

The preferred recombinant HEV proteins consist of at least one ORF protein. Other recombinant proteins made

up of more than one of the same or different ORF proteins may be made to alter the biological properties of the protein. It is contemplated that additions, substitutions or deletions of discrete amino acids or of discrete sequences of amino acids may enhance the biological activity of the HEV proteins.

The present invention is also a nucleic acid sequence which is capable of directing the production of the above-discussed HEV protein or proteins substantially homologous to the HEV proteins. This nucleic acid sequence, designated SAR-55, is set forth below as SEQ ID NO.: 4 and was deposited with the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC) on September 17, 1992 (ATCC accession number 75302).

	AGGCAGACCA	CATATGTGGT	CGATGCCATG	GAGGCCCATC	40
15	AGTTTATCAA	GGCTCCTGGC	ATCACTACTG	CTATTGAGCA	80
	GGCTGCTCTA	GCAGCGGCCA	ACTCTGCCCT	TGCGAATGCT	120
	GTGGTAGTTA	GGCCTTTTCT	CTCTCACCAG	CAGATTGAGA	160
	TCCTTATTAA	CCTAATGCAA	CCTCGCCAGC	TTGTTTTCCG	200
	CCCCGAGGTT	TTCTGGAACC	ATCCCATCCA	GCGTGTTATC	240
20	CATAATGAGC	TGGAGCTTTA	CTGTCGCGCC	CGCTCCGGCC	280
	GCTGCCTCGA	AATTGGTGCC	CACCCCCGCT	CAATAAATGA	320
	CAATCCTAAT	GTGGTCCACC	GTGCTTCCT	CCGTCCTGCC	360
	GGGCGTGATG	TTCAGCGTTG	GTATACTGCC	CCTACCCGCG	400
	GGCCGGCTGC	TAATTGCCGG	CGTTCCGCGC	TGCGCGGGCT	440
25	CCCCGCTGCT	GACCGCACTT	ACTGCTTCGA	CGGGTTTTCT	480
	GGCTGTAACT	TTCCCGCCGA	GACGGGCATC	GCCCTCTATT	520
	CTCTCCATGA	TATGTCACCA	TCTGATGTCG	CCGAGGCTAT	560
	GTTCCGCCAT	GGTATGACGC	GGCTTTACGC	TGCCCTCCAC	600
	CTCCCGCCTG	AGGTCCTGTT	GCCCCCTGGC	ACATACCGCA	640
30	CCGCGTCGTA	CTTGCTGATC	CATGACGGCA	GGCGCGTTGT	680
	GGTGACGTAT	GAGGGTGACA	CTAGTGCTGG	TTATAACCAC	720
	GATGTTTCCA	ACCTGCGCTC	CTGGATTAGA	ACCACTAAGG	760
	TTACCGGAGA	CCACCCTCTC	GTCATCGAGC	GGGTTAGGGC	800
	CATTGGCTGC	CACTTTGTCC	TTTTACTCAC	GGCTGCTCCG	840
35	GAGCCATCAC	CTATGCCCTA	TGTCCCTTAC	CCCCGGTCTA	880

0	CCGAGGTCTA	TGTCCGATCG	ATCTTCGGCC	CGGGTGGCAC	920
	CCCCTCCCTA	TTTCCAACCT	CATGCTCCAC	CAAGTCGACC	960
	TTCCATGCTG	TCCCTGCCCA	TATCTGGGAC	CGTCTCATGT	1000
	TGTTTCGGGC	CACCCTAGAT	GACCAAGCCT	TTTGCTGCTC	1040
	CCGCCTAATG	ACTTACCTCC	GCGGCATTAG	CTACAAGGTT	1080
5	ACTGTGGGCA	CCCTTGTTGC	CAATGAAGGC	TGGAACGCCT	1120
	CTGAGGACGC	TCTTACAGCT	GTCATCACTG	CCGCCTACCT	1160
	TACCATCTGC	CACCAGCGGT	ACCTCCGCAC	TCAGGCTATA	1200
	TCTAAGGGGA	TGCGTCGCCT	GGAGCGGGAG	CATGCTCAGA	1240
	AGTTTATAAC	ACGCCTCTAC	AGTTGGCTCT	TTGAGAAGTC	1280
10	CGGCCGTGAT	TATATCCCCG	GCCGTCAGTT	GGAGTTCTAC	1320
	GCTCAGTGTA	GGCGCTGGCT	CTCGGCCGGC	TTTCATCTTG	1360
	ACCCACGGGT	GTTGGTTTTT	GATGAGTCGG	CCCCCTGCCA	1400
	CTGTAGGACT	GCGATTCGTA	AGGCGGTCTC	AAAGTTTTGC	1440
	TGCTTTATGA	AGTGGCTGGG	CCAGGAGTGC	ACCTGTTTTT	1480
15	TACAACCTGC	AGAAGGCGTC	GTTGGCGACC	AGGGCCATGA	1520
	CAACGAGGCC	TATGAGGGGT	CTGATGTTGA	CCCTGCTGAA	1560
	TCCGCTATTA	GTGACATATC	TGGGTCCTAC	GTAGTCCCTG	1600
	GCACTGCCCT	CCAACCGCTT	TACCAAGCCC	TTGACCTCCC	1640
	CGCTGAGATT	GTGGCTCGTG	CAGGCCGGCT	GACCGCCACA	1680
20	GTAAAGGTCT	CCCAGGTCGA	CGGGCGGATC	GATTGTGAGA	1720
	CCCTTCTCGG	TAATAAAACC	TTCCGCACGT	CGTTTGTTGA	1760
	CGGGGCGGTT	TTAGAGACTA	ATGGCCCAGA	GCGCCACAAT	1800
	CTCTCTTTTG	ATGCCAGTCA	GAGCACTATG	GCCGCCGGCC	1840
	CTTTCAGTCT	CACCTATGCC	GCCTCTGCTG	CTGGGCTGGA	1880
25	GGTGCGCTAT	GTCGCCGCCG	GGCTTGACCA	CCGGGCGGTT	1920
	TTTGCCCCCG	GCGTTTCACC	CCGGTCAGCC	CCTGGCGAGG	1960
	TCACCGCCTT	CTGTTCTGCC	CTATACAGGT	TTAATCGCGA	2000
	GGCCCAGCGC	CTTTCGCTGA	CCGGTAATTT	TTGGTTCCAT	2040
	CCTGAGGGGC	TCCTTGGCCC	CTTTGCCCCG	TTTTCCCCCG	2080
30	GGCATGTTTG	GGAGTCGGCT	AATCCATTCT	GTGGCGAGAG	2120
	CACACTTTAC	ACCCGCACTT	GGTCGGAGGT	TGATGCTGTT	2160
	CCTAGTCCAG	CCCAGCCCGA	CTTAGGTTTT	ACATCTGAGC	2200
	CTTCTATACC	TAGTAGGGCC	GCCACACCTA	CCCCGGCGGC	2240
	CCCTCTACCC	CCCCCTGCAC	CGGATCCTTC	CCCTACTCTC	2280
35	TCTGCTCCGG	CGCGTGGTGA	GCCGGCTCCT	GGCGCTACCG	2320

0	CCAGGGCCCC	AGCCATAACC	CACCAGACGG	CCCGGCATCG	2360
	CCGCCTGCTC	TTTACCTACC	CGGATGGCTC	TAAGGTGTTC	2400
	GCCGGCTCGC	TGTTTGAGTC	GACATGTACC	TGGCTCGTTA	2440
	ACGCGTCTAA	TGTTGACCAC	CGCCCTGGCG	GTGGGCTCTG	2480
	TCATGCATTT	TACCAGAGGT	ACCCCGCCTC	CTTTGATGCT	2520
5	GCCTCTTTTG	TGATGCGCGA	CGGCGCGGCC	GCCTACACAT	2560
	TAACCCCCCG	GCCAATAATT	CATGCCGTCG	CTCCTGATTA	2600
	TAGGTTGGAA	CATAACCCAA	AGAGGCTTGA	GGCTGCCTAC	2640
	CGGGAGACTT	GCTCCCGCCT	CGGTACCGCT	GCATACCCAC	2680
	TCCTCGGGAC	CGGCATATAC	CAGGTGCCGA	TCGGTCCCAG	2720
10	TTTTGACGCC	TGGGAGCGGA	ATCACCGCCC	CGGGGACGAG	2760
	TTGTACCTTC	CTGAGCTTGC	TGCCAGATGG	TTCGAGGCCA	2800
	ATAGGCCGAC	CTGCCCAACT	CTCACTATAA	CTGAGGATGT	2840
	TGCGCGGACA	GCAAATCTGG	CTATCGAACT	TGACTCAGCC	2880
	ACAGACGTCG	GCCGGGCCCTG	TGCCGGCTGT	CGAGTCACCC	2920
15	CCGGCGTTGT	GCAGTACCAG	TTTACCGCAG	GTGTGCCTGG	2960
	ATCCGGCAAG	TCCCGCTCTA	TTACCCAAGC	CGACGTGGAC	3000
	GTTGTCTGTG	TCCCGACCCG	GGAGTTGCGT	AATGCCTGGC	3040
	GCCGCCGCGG	CTTCGCTGCT	TTCACCCCGC	AACTGCGGGC	3080
	TAGAGTCACC	CAGGGGCGCC	GGGTTGTCAT	TGATGAGGCC	3120
20	CCGTCCCTTC	CCCCTCATTT	GCTGCTGCTC	CACATGCAGC	3160
	GGGCCGCCAC	CGTCCACCTT	CTTGGCGACC	CGAATCAGAT	3200
	CCCAGCCATC	GATTTTGAGC	ACGCCGGGCT	CGTTCCCGCC	3240
	ATCAGGCCCG	ATTTGGCCCC	CACCTCCTGG	TGGCATGTTA	3280
	CCCATCGCTG	CCCTGCGGAT	GTATGTGAGC	TAATCCGCGG	3320
25	CGCATACCCT	ATGATTGAGA	CCACTAGTCG	GGTCCTCCGG	3360
	TCGTTGTTCT	GGGGTGAGCC	CGCCGTTGGG	CAGAAGCTAG	3400
	TGTTACCCA	GGCGGCTAAG	GCCGCCAACC	CCGGTTCAGT	3440
	GACGGTCCAT	GAGGCACAGG	GCGCTACCTA	CACAGAGACT	3480
	ACCATCATTG	CCACGGCAGA	TGCTCGAGGC	CTCATTCAGT	3520
30	CGTCCCGAGC	TCATGCCATT	GTTGCCTTGA	CGCGCCACAC	3560
	TGAGAAGTGC	GTCATCATTG	ACGCACCAGG	CCTGCTTCGC	3600
	GAGGTGGGCA	TCTCCGATGC	AATCGTTAAT	AACTTTTTTC	3640
	TTGCTGGTGG	CGAAATTGGC	CACCAGCGCC	CATCTGTTAT	3680
	CCCTCGCGGC	AATCCTGACG	CCAATGTTGA	CACCTTGCTT	3720
35	GCCTTCCCGC	CGTCTTGCCA	GATTAGCGCC	TTCCATCAGT	3760

0	TGGCTGAGGA	GCTTGGCCAC	AGACCTGCCC	CTGTCGCGGC	3800
	TGTTCTACCG	CCCTGCCCTG	AGCTTGAACA	GGGCCTTCTC	3840
	TACCTGCCCC	AAGAACTCAC	CACCTGTGAT	AGTGTCTGTA	3880
	CATTTGAATT	AACAGATATT	GTGCATTGTC	GTATGGCCGC	3920
	CCCGAGCCAG	CGCAAGGCCG	TGCTGTCCAC	GCTCGTGGGC	3960
5	CGTTATGGCC	GCCGCACAAA	GCTCTACAAT	GCCTCCCACT	4000
	CTGATGTTTC	CGACTCTCTC	GCCCGTTTTA	TCCCGGCCAT	4040
	TGGCCCCGTA	CAGGTTACAA	CCTGTGAATT	GTACGAGCTA	4080
	GTGGAGGCCA	TGGTCGAGAA	GGGCCAGGAC	GGCTCCGCCG	4120
	TCCTTGAGCT	CGACCTTTGT	AGCCGCGACG	TGTCCAGGAT	4160
10	CACCTTCTTC	CAGAAAGATT	GTAATAAATT	CACCACGGGG	4200
	GAGACCATCG	CCCATGGTAA	AGTGGGCCAG	GGCATTTCGG	4240
	CCTGGAGTAA	GACCTTCTGT	GCCCTTTTCG	GCCCCTGGTT	4280
	CCGTGCTATT	GAGAAGGCTA	TCCTGGCCCT	GCTCCCTCAG	4320
	GGTGTGTTTT	ATGGGGATGC	CTTTGATGAC	ACCGTCTTCT	4360
15	CGGCGGCTGT	GGCCGCAGCA	AAGGCATCCA	GAATGACTTT	4400
	TCTGAGTTTG	ATTCCACCCA	GAATAATTTT	TCCTTGGGCC	4440
	TAGAGTGTGC	TATTATGGAG	GAGTGTGGGA	TGCCGCAGTG	4480
	GCTCATCCGC	TTGTACCACC	TTATAAGGTC	TGCGTGGATT	4520
	CTGCAGGCC	CGAAGGAGTC	CCTGCGAGGG	TTTTGGAAGA	4560
20	AACACTCCGG	TGAGCCCGGC	ACCCTTCTGT	GGAATACTGT	4600
	CTGGAACATG	GCCGTTATCA	CCCACTGTTA	TGATTTCCGC	4640
	GATCTGCAGG	TGGCTGCCTT	TAAAGGTGAT	GATTCGATAG	4680
	TGCTTTGCAG	TGAGTACCGT	CAGAGCCCAG	GGGCTGCTGT	4720
	CCTGATTGCT	GGCTGTGGCC	TAAAGTTGAA	GGTGGATTTT	4760
25	CGTCCGATTG	GTCTGTATGC	AGGTGTTGTG	GTGGCCCCCG	4800
	GCCTTGCGCG	GCTTCCTGAT	GTCGTGCGCT	TCGCCGGTCG	4840
	GCTTACTGAG	AAGAATTGGG	GCCCTGGCCC	CGAGCGGGCG	4880
	GAGCAGCTCC	GCCTCGCTGT	GAGTGATTTT	CTCCGCAAGC	4920
	TCACGAATGT	AGCTCAGATG	TGTGTGGATG	TTGTCTCTCG	4960
30	TGTTTATGGG	GTTTCCCCTG	GGCTCGTTCA	TAACCTGATT	5000
	GGCATGCTAC	AGGCTGTTGC	TGATGGCAAG	GCTCATTTCA	5040
	CTGAGTCAGT	GAAGCCAGTG	CTTGACCTGA	CAAATTCAAT	5080
	TCTGTGTCGG	GTGGAATGAA	TAACATGTCT	TTTGCTGCGC	5120
	CCATGGGTTC	GCGACCATGC	GCCCTCGGCC	TATTTTGCTG	5160
35	TTGCTCCTCA	TGTTTCTGCC	TATGCTGCCC	GCGCCACCGC	5200

0	CCGGTCAGCC	GTCTGGCCGC	CGTCGTGGGC	GGCGCAGCGG	5240
	CGGTTCCGGC	GGTGGTTTCT	GGGGTGACCG	GGTTGATTCT	5280
	CAGCCCTTCG	CAATCCCCTA	TATTCATCCA	ACCAACCCCT	5320
	TCGCCCCCGA	TGTCACCGCT	GCGGCCGGGG	CTGGACCTCG	5360
	TGTTCGCCAA	CCCGCCCGAC	CACTCGGCTC	CGCTTGCGGT	5400
5	GACCAGGCC	AGCGCCCCGC	CGCTGCCTCA	CGTCGTAGAC	5440
	CTACCACAGC	TGGGGCCGCG	CCGCTAACCG	CGGTCGCTCC	5480
	GGCCCATGAC	ACCCCGCCAG	TGCCTGATGT	TGACTCCCGC	5520
	GGCGCCATCC	TGCGCCGGCA	GTATAACCTA	TCAACATCTC	5560
	CCCTCACCTC	TTCCGTGGCC	ACCGGCACAA	ATTTGGTTCT	5600
10	TTACGCCGCT	CCTCTTAGCC	CGCTTCTACC	CCTCCAGGAC	5640
	GGCACCAATA	CTCATATAAT	GGCTACAGAA	GCTTCTAATT	5680
	ATGCCCAGTA	CCGGGTTGCT	CGTGCCACAA	TTCGCTACCG	5720
	CCCGCTGGTC	CCCAACGCTG	TTGGTGGCTA	CGCTATCTCC	5760
	ATTTCGTTCT	GGCCACAGAC	CACCACCACC	CCGACGTCCG	5800
15	TTGACATGAA	TTCAATAACC	TCGACGGATG	TCCGTATTTT	5840
	AGTCCAGCCC	GGCATAGCCT	CCGAGCTTGT	TATTCCAAGT	5880
	GAGCGCCTAC	ACTATCGCAA	CCAAGGTTGG	CGCTCTGTTG	5920
	AGACCTCCGG	GGTGGCGGAG	GAGGAGGCCA	CCTCTGGTCT	5960
	TGTCATGCTC	TGCATACATG	GCTCACCTGT	AAATTCTTAT	6000
20	ACTAATACAC	CCTATACCGG	TGCCCTCGGG	CTGTTGGACT	6040
	TTGCCCTCGA	ACTTGAGTTC	CGCAACCTCA	CCCCCGGTAA	6080
	TACCAATACG	CGGGTCTCGC	GTTACTCCAG	CACTGCCCCG	6120
	CACCGCCTTC	GTCGCGGTGC	AGATGGGACT	GCCGAGCTCA	6160
	CCACCACGGC	TGCTACTCGC	TTCATGAAGG	ACCTCTATTT	6200
25	TACTAGTACT	AATGGTGTTG	GTGAGATCGG	CCGCGGGATA	6240
	GCGCTTACCC	TGTTTAAACCT	TGCTGACACC	CTGCTTGGCG	6280
	GTCTACCGAC	AGAATTGATT	TCGTCGGCTG	GTGGCCAGCT	6320
	GTTCTACTCT	CGCCCCGTCT	TCTCAGCCAA	TGGCGAGCCG	6360
	ACTGTTAAGC	TGTATACATC	TGTGGAGAAT	GCTCAGCAGG	6400
30	ATAAGGGTAT	TGCAATCCCG	CATGACATCG	ACCTCGGGGA	6440
	ATCCCGTGTA	GTTATTCAGG	ATTATGACAA	CCAACATGAG	6480
	CAGGACCGAC	CGACACCTTC	CCCAGCCCCA	TCGCGTCCTT	6520
	TTTCTGTCCT	CCGAGCTAAC	GATGTGCTTT	GGCTTTCTCT	6560
	CACCGCTGCC	GAGTATGACC	AGTCCACTTA	CGGCTCTTCG	6600
35	ACCGGCCCCAG	TCTATGTCTC	TGACTCTGTG	ACCTTGGTTA	6640

° ATGTTGCGAC CGGCGCGCAG GCCGTTGCCC GGTCACCTCGA 6680
CTGGACCAAG GTCACACTTG ATGGTCGCCC CCTTTCCACC 6720
ATCCAGCAGT ATTCAAAGAC CTTCTTTGTC CTGCCGCTCC 6760
GCGGTAAGCT CTCCTTTTGG GAGGCAGGAA CTAATAAGC 6800
CGGGTACCCT TATAATTATA ACACCACTGC TAGTGACCAA 6840
5 CTGCTCGTTG AGAATGCCGC TGGGCATCGG GTTGCTATTT 6880
CCACCTACAC TACTAGCCTG GGTGCTGGCC CCGTCTCTAT 6920
TTCCGCGGTT GCTGTTTTAG CCCCCACTC TGTGCTAGCA 6960
TTGCTTGAGG ATACCATGGA CTACCCTGCC CGCGCCATA 7000
CTTTCGATGA CTTCTGCCCCG GAGTGCCGCC CCCTTGGCCT 7040
10 CCAGGGTTGT GCTTTTCAGT CTACTGTCGC TGAGCTTCAG 7080
CGCCTTAAGA TGAAGGTGGG TAAAACTCGG GAGTTATAGT 7120
TTATTTGCTT GTGCCCCCCT TCTTTCTGTT GCTTATTT 7168

The abbreviations used for the nucleotides are those standardly used in the art.

The sequence in one direction has been designated by convention as the "plus" sequence since it is the protein-encoding strand of RNA viruses and this is the sequence shown above as SEQ ID. NO.:4.

The deduced amino acid sequences of the open reading frames of SAR-55 have SEQ ID NO. 1, SEQ ID NO. 2, and SEQ ID NO. 3. ORF-1 starts at nucleotide 28 of SEQ. ID NO. 4 and extends 5078 nucleotides; ORF-2 starts at nucleotide 5147 of SEQ. ID NO. 4 and extends 1979 nucleotides; and ORF-3 starts at nucleotide 5106 of SEQ. ID NO. 4 and extends 368 nucleotides.

Variations are contemplated in the DNA sequence which will result in a DNA sequence that is capable of directing production of analogs of the ORF-2 protein. By "analogs of the ORF-2 protein" as used throughout the specification and claims is meant a protein having an amino acid sequence substantially identical to a sequence specifically shown herein where one or more of the residues shown in the sequences presented herein have been substituted with a biologically equivalent residue such that

° the resultant protein (i.e. the "analog") is antigenic and/or immunogenic. It should be noted that the DNA sequence set forth above represents a preferred embodiment of the present invention. Due to the degeneracy of the genetic code, it is to be understood that numerous choices
5 of nucleotides may be made that will lead to a DNA sequence capable of directing production of the instant ORF proteins or their analogs. As such, DNA sequences which are functionally equivalent to the sequences set forth above or which are functionally equivalent to sequences that would
10 direct production of analogs of the ORF proteins produced pursuant to the amino acid sequence set forth above, are intended to be encompassed within the present invention.

The present invention relates to a method for detecting the hepatitis E virus in biological samples based
15 on selective amplification of hepatitis E gene fragments. Preferably, this method utilizes a pair of single-stranded primers derived from non-homologous regions of opposite strands of a DNA duplex fragment, which in turn is derived from a hepatitis E virus whose genome contains a region
20 homologous to the SAR-55 sequence shown in SEQ ID No.: 4. These primers can be used in a method following the process for amplifying selected nucleic acid sequences as defined in U.S. Patent No. 4,683,202.

The present invention also relates to the use of
25 single-stranded antisense poly-or oligonucleotides derived from sequences homologous to the SAR-55 cDNA to inhibit the expression of hepatitis E genes. These anti-sense poly-or oligonucleotides can be either DNA or RNA. The targeted sequence is typically messenger RNA and more preferably, a
30 signal sequence required for processing or translation of the RNA. The antisense poly-or oligonucleotides can be conjugated to a polycation such as polylysine as disclosed in Lemaitre, M. et al. (1989) Proc Natl Acad Sci USA 84:648-652; and this conjugate can be administered to a mammal in

35

- ° an amount sufficient to hybridize to and inhibit the function of the messenger RNA.

The present invention includes a recombinant DNA method for the manufacture of HEV proteins, preferably a protein composed of at least one ORF protein, most preferably at least one ORF-2 protein. The recombinant ORF protein may be composed of one ORF protein or a combination of the same or different ORF proteins. A natural or synthetic nucleic acid sequence may be used to direct production of the HEV proteins. In one embodiment of the invention, the method comprises:

- (a) preparation of a nucleic acid sequence capable of directing a host organism to produce a protein of HEV;
- (b) cloning the nucleic acid sequence into a vector capable of being transferred into and replicated in a host organism, such vector containing operational elements for the nucleic acid sequence;
- (c) transferring the vector containing the nucleic acid and operational elements into a host organism capable of expressing the protein;
- (d) culturing the host organism under conditions appropriate for amplification of the vector and expression of the protein; and
- (e) harvesting the protein.

In another embodiment of the invention, the method for the recombinant DNA synthesis of a protein encoded by nucleic acids of HEV, preferably a nucleic acid sequence encoding at least one ORF of HEV or a combination of the same or different ORF proteins, most preferably encoding at least one ORF-2 amino acid sequence, comprises:

- (a) culturing a transformed or transfected host organism containing a nucleic acid sequence capable of directing the host organism to produce a protein, under conditions such that the protein is produced, said protein exhibiting substantial homology to a native HEV protein

° (over the region of comparison between the two proteins) isolated from HEV having the amino acid sequence according to SEQ ID NO. 1, SEQ ID NO. 2 or SEQ ID NO. 3, or combinations thereof.

5 In one embodiment, the RNA sequence of the viral genome of HEV strain SAR-55 was isolated and cloned to cDNA as follows. Viral RNA is extracted from a biological sample collected from cynomolgus monkeys infected with SAR-55 and the viral RNA is then reverse transcribed and amplified by polymerase chain reaction using primers complementary to the
10 plus or minus strands of the genome of a strain of HEV from Burma (Tam et al. (1991)) or the SAR-55 genome. The PCR fragments are subcloned into pBR322 or pGEM-32 and the double-stranded PCR fragments were sequenced.

15 The vectors contemplated for use in the present invention include any vectors into which a nucleic acid sequence as described above can be inserted, along with any preferred or required operational elements, and which vector can then be subsequently transferred into a host organism and replicated in such organism. Preferred vectors are
20 those whose restriction sites have been well documented and which contain the operational elements preferred or required for transcription of the nucleic acid sequence.

25 The "operational elements" as discussed herein include at least one promoter, at least one terminator codon, and any other DNA sequences necessary or preferred for appropriate transcription and subsequent translation of the vector nucleic acid. In particular, it is contemplated that such vectors will contain at least one origin of replication recognized by the host organism along with at
30 least one selectable marker and at least one promoter sequence capable of initiating transcription of the nucleic acid sequence.

35 In construction of the cloning vector of the present invention, it should additionally be noted that multiple copies of the nucleic acid sequence and its

° attendant operational elements may be inserted into each vector. In such an embodiment, the host organism would produce greater amounts per vector of the desired HEV protein. The number of multiple copies of the DNA sequence (either a single sequence or two distinct sequences), which
5 may be inserted into the vector is limited only by the ability of the resultant vector due to its size, to be transferred into and replicated and transcribed in an appropriate host microorganism.

In another embodiment, restriction digest fragments containing a coding sequence for HEV proteins can be
10 inserted into a suitable expression vector that functions in prokaryotic or eukaryotic cells. By suitable is meant that the vector is capable of carrying and expressing a complete nucleic acid sequence coding for HEV proteins, preferably at
15 least one ORF protein. Preferred expression vectors are those that function in a eukaryotic cell. Examples of such vectors include but are not limited to vectors useful for expression in yeast (e.g. pPIC9 vector-Invitrogen) vaccinia virus vectors, adenovirus or herpesviruses, preferably
20 baculovirus transfer vectors. Preferred vectors are p63-2, which contains the complete ORF-2 gene, and P59-4, which contains the complete ORF-3 and ORF-2 genes. These vectors were deposited with the American Type Culture Collection, 12301 Parklawn Drive, Rockville, MD 20852 USA on September
25 10, 1992 and have accession numbers 75299 (P63-2) and 75300 (P59-4). More preferred vectors are bHEV ORF-2 5'tr, which encodes amino acids 112-660 of ORF-2, bHEV ORF-2 5'-3'tr, which encodes amino acids 112-607 of ORF-2, and a baculovirus vector which encodes amino acids 112-578 of HEV
30 ORF2. Example 1 illustrates the cloning of the ORF-2 gene into pBlueBac to produce p63-2. This method includes digesting the genome of HEV strain SAR-55 with the restriction enzymes NruI and BglII, inserting a polylinker containing BlnI and BglII sites into the unique NheI site of
35

° the vector and inserting the NruI-BglIII ORF-2 fragment in BlnI-BglIII pBlueBac using an adapter.

In yet another embodiment, the selected recombinant expression vector may then be transfected into a suitable eukaryotic cell system for purposes of expressing the recombinant protein. Such eukaryotic cell systems include, but are not limited to, yeast, and cell lines such as HeLa, MRC-5, CV-1, HuH7 or HepG2. One preferred eukaryotic cell system is Sf9 insect cells. One preferred method involves use of the baculovirus expression vectors and where the insect cell line Sf9.

The expressed recombinant protein may be detected by methods known in the art which include Coomassie blue staining and Western blotting using sera containing anti-HEV antibody as shown in Example 2. Another method is the detection of virus-like particles by immunoelectron microscopy as shown in Example 3.

In a further embodiment, the recombinant protein expressed by the SF9 cells can be obtained as a crude lysate or it can be purified by standard protein purification procedures known in the art which may include differential precipitation, molecular sieve chromatography, ion-exchange chromatography, isoelectric focusing, gel electrophoresis, affinity, and immunoaffinity chromatography and the like. In the case of immunoaffinity chromatography, the recombinant protein may be purified by passage through a column containing a resin which has bound thereto antibodies specific for the ORF protein. An example of protocols for the purification of recombinantly expressed HEV ORF2 protein from clarified baculovirus-infected cell lysates and supernatant media respectively are described in Example 16.

In another embodiment, the expressed recombinant proteins of this invention can be used in immunoassays for diagnosing or prognosing hepatitis E in a mammal including but not limited to humans, chimpanzees, Old World monkeys, New World monkeys, other primates and the like. In a

° preferred embodiment, the immunoassay is useful in diagnosing hepatitis E infection in humans. Immunoassays using the HEV proteins, particularly the ORF proteins, and especially ORF 2 proteins, provide a highly specific, sensitive and reproducible method for diagnosing HEV infections, in contrast to immunoassays which utilize partial ORF proteins.

Immunoassays of the present invention may be a radioimmunoassay, Western blot assay, immunofluorescent assay, enzyme immunoassay, chemiluminescent assay, immunohistochemical assay and the like. Standard techniques known in the art for ELISA are described in Methods in Immunodiagnosis, 2nd Edition, Rose and Bigazzi, eds., John Wiley and Sons, 1980 and Campbell et al., Methods of Immunology, W.A. Benjamin, Inc., 1964, both of which are incorporated herein by reference. Such assays may be a direct, indirect, competitive, or noncompetitive immunoassay as described in the art. (Oellerich, M. 1984. J.Clin. Chem. Clin. BioChem. 22: 895-904) Biological samples appropriate for such detection assays include, but are not limited to, tissue biopsy extracts, whole blood, plasma, serum, cerebrospinal fluid, pleural fluid, urine and the like.

In one embodiment, test serum is reacted with a solid phase reagent having surface-bound recombinant HEV protein as an antigen, preferably an ORF protein or combination of different ORF proteins such as ORF-2 and ORF-3, ORF-1 and ORF-3 and the like. Most preferably, the HEV protein is a protein consisting essentially of amino acids 112-607 of HEV ORF2. The solid surface reagent can be prepared by known techniques for attaching protein to solid support material. These attachment methods include non-specific adsorption of the protein to the support or covalent attachment of the protein to a reactive group on the support. After reaction of the antigen with anti-HEV antibody, unbound serum components are removed by washing and the antigen-antibody complex is reacted with a secondary antibody such as labelled anti-human antibody. The label

° may be an enzyme which is detected by incubating the solid support in the presence of a suitable fluorimetric or colorimetric reagent. Other detectable labels may also be used, such as radiolabels or colloidal gold, and the like.

In a preferred embodiment, the protein expressed
5 by the recombinant baculovirus vector containing the ORF-2 sequence of SAR-55 which encodes amino acids 112-607 of HEV ORF2 is used as a specific binding agent to detect anti-HEV antibodies, preferably IgG or IgM antibodies. Example 10 shows the results of an ELISA in which the solid phase
10 reagent has the recombinant 55 kilodalton protein consisting of amino acids 112-607 as the surface antigen. This protein is capable of detecting antibodies produced in response to different strains of HEV but does not detect antibodies produced in response to Hepatitis A, B, C or D.

15 The HEV protein and analogs may be prepared in the form of a kit, alone, or in combinations with other reagents such as secondary antibodies, for use in immunoassays.

The recombinant HEV proteins, preferably an ORF protein or combination of ORF proteins, more preferably an
20 ORF-2 protein and substantially homologous proteins and analogs of the invention can be used as a vaccine to protect mammals against challenge with Hepatitis E. The vaccine, which acts as an immunogen, may be a cell, cell lysate from cells transfected with a recombinant expression vector or a culture supernatant containing the expressed protein.
25 Alternatively, the immunogen is a partially or substantially purified recombinant protein. While it is possible for the immunogen to be administered in a pure or substantially pure form, it is preferable to present it as a pharmaceutical composition, formulation or preparation.
30

The formulations of the present invention, both for veterinary and for human use, comprise an immunogen as described above, together with one or more pharmaceutically acceptable carriers and optionally other therapeutic ingredients.
35 The carrier(s) must be "acceptable" in the sense of

° being compatible with the other ingredients of the formulation and not deleterious to the recipient thereof. The formulations may conveniently be presented in unit dosage form and may be prepared by any method well-known in the pharmaceutical art.

5 All methods include the step of bringing into association the active ingredient with the carrier which constitutes one or more accessory ingredients. In general, the formulations are prepared by uniformly and intimately bringing into association the active ingredient with liquid
10 carriers or finely divided solid carriers or both, and then, if necessary, shaping the product into the desired formulation.

Formulations suitable for intravenous, intramuscular, subcutaneous, or intraperitoneal
15 administration conveniently comprise sterile aqueous solutions of the active ingredient with solutions which are preferably isotonic with the blood of the recipient. Such formulations may be conveniently prepared by dissolving solid active ingredient in water containing physiologically
20 compatible substances such as sodium chloride (e.g. 0.1-2.0M), glycine, and the like, and having a buffered pH compatible with physiological conditions to produce an aqueous solution, and rendering said solution sterile. These may be present in unit or multi-dose containers, for
25 example, sealed ampoules or vials.

The formulations of the present invention may incorporate a stabilizer. Illustrative stabilizers are polyethylene glycol, proteins, saccharides, amino acids, inorganic acids, and organic acids which may be used either
30 on their own or as admixtures. These stabilizers are preferably incorporated in an amount of 0.11-10,000 parts by weight per part by weight of immunogen. If two or more stabilizers are to be used, their total amount is preferably within the range specified above. These stabilizers are
35 used in aqueous solutions at the appropriate concentration

° and pH. The specific osmotic pressure of such aqueous solutions is generally in the range of 0.1-3.0 osmoles, preferably in the range of 0.8-1.2. The pH of the aqueous solution is adjusted to be within the range of 5.0-9.0, preferably within the range of 6-8. In formulating the immunogen of the present invention, anti-adsorption agent
5 may be used.

Additional pharmaceutical methods may be employed to control the duration of action. Controlled release preparations may be achieved through the use of polymer to complex or absorb the proteins or their derivatives. The
10 controlled delivery may be exercised by selecting appropriate macromolecules (for example polyester, polyamino acids, polyvinyl, pyrrolidone, ethylenevinylacetate, methylcellulose, carboxymethylcellulose, or protamine sulfate) and the concentration of macromolecules as well as the methods of incorporation in order to control release. Another possible method to control the duration of action by controlled-release preparations is to incorporate the proteins, protein analogs or their functional derivatives,
15 into particles of a polymeric material such as polyesters, polyamino acids, hydrogels, poly(lactic acid) or ethylene vinylacetate copolymers. Alternatively, instead of incorporating these agents into polymeric particles, it is possible to entrap these materials in microcapsules prepared, for example, by coacervation techniques or by
20 interfacial polymerization, for example, hydroxymethylcellulose or gelatin-microcapsules and poly(methylmethacrylate) microcapsules, respectively, or in colloidal drug delivery systems, for example, liposomes, albumin microspheres, microemulsions, nanoparticles, and
25 nanocapsules or in macroemulsions.

When oral preparations are desired, the compositions may be combined with typical carriers, such as lactose, sucrose, starch, talc, magnesium stearate,
35 crystalline cellulose, methyl cellulose, carboxymethyl

- ° cellulose, glycerin, sodium alginate or gum arabic among others.

The proteins of the present invention may be supplied in the form of a kit, alone or in the form of a pharmaceutical composition as described above.

- 5 Vaccination can be conducted by conventional methods. For example, the immunogen can be used in a suitable diluent such as saline or water, or complete or incomplete adjuvants. Further, the immunogen may or may not be bound to a carrier to make the protein immunogenic.
- 10 Examples of such carrier molecules include but are not limited to bovine serum albumin (BSA), keyhole limpet hemocyanin (KLH), tetanus toxoid, and the like. The immunogen can be administered by any route appropriate for antibody production such as intravenous, intraperitoneal,
- 15 intramuscular, subcutaneous, and the like. The immunogen may be administered once or at periodic intervals until a significant titer of anti-HEV antibody is produced. The antibody may be detected in the serum using an immunoassay.

- In yet another embodiment, the immunogen may be
- 20 nucleic acid sequence capable of directing host organism synthesis of an HEV ORF protein. Such nucleic acid sequence may be inserted into a suitable expression vector by methods known to those skilled in the art. Expression vectors suitable for producing high efficiency gene transfer in vivo
- 25 include, but are not limited to, retroviral, adenoviral and vaccinia viral vectors. Operational elements of such expression vectors are disclosed previously in the present specification and are known to one skilled in the art. Such expression vectors can be administered intravenously,
- 30 intramuscularly, subcutaneously, intraperitoneally or orally.

- In an alternative embodiment, direct gene transfer may be accomplished via intramuscular injection of, for example, plasmid-based eukaryotic expression vectors
- 35 containing a nucleic acid sequence capable of directing host

° organism synthesis of HEV ORF protein(s). Such an approach has previously been utilized to produce the hepatitis B surface antigen in vivo and resulted in an antibody response to the surface antigen (Davis, H.L. et al. (1993) Human Molecular Genetics, 2:1847-1851; see also Davis et al. (1993) Human Gene Therapy, 4:151-159 and 733-740) and Davis, H.L. et al., Proc Natl Acad Sci USA (1996) 93:7213-7218).

When the immunogen is a partially or substantially purified recombinant HEV ORF protein, dosages effective to elicit a protective antibody response against HEV range from about 0.1 μg to about 100 μg . A more preferred range is from about 0.5 μg to about 70 μg and a most preferred range is from about 10 μg to about 50 μg .

Dosages of HEV-ORF protein - encoding nucleic acid sequence effective to elicit a protective antibody response against HEV range from about 1 to about 5000 μg ; a more preferred range being about 300 to about 2000 μg .

The expression vectors containing a nucleic acid sequence capable of directing host organism synthesis of an HEV ORF protein(s) may be supplied in the form of a kit, alone or in the form of a pharmaceutical composition as described above.

The administration of the immunogen of the present invention may be for either a prophylactic or therapeutic purpose. When provided prophylactically, the immunogen is provided in advance of any exposure to HEV or in advance of any symptom due to HEV infection. The prophylactic administration of the immunogen serves to prevent or attenuate any subsequent infection of HEV in a mammal. When provided therapeutically, the immunogen is provided at (or shortly after) the onset of the infection or at the onset of any symptom of infection or disease caused by HEV. The therapeutic administration of the immunogen serves to attenuate the infection or disease.

A preferred embodiment is a vaccine prepared using recombinant ORF-2 protein expressed by the ORF-2 sequence of

° HEV strain SAR-55 and equivalents thereof. Since the recombinant ORF-2 protein has been demonstrated to provide protection against challenge with heterologous or homologous HEV strains, their utility in protecting against a variety of HEV strains is indicated.

5 In addition to use as a vaccine, the compositions can be used to prepare antibodies to HEV virus-like particles. The antibodies can be used directly as antiviral agents. To prepare antibodies, a host animal is immunized using the virus particles or, as appropriate, non-particle
10 antigens native to the virus particle are bound to a carrier as described above for vaccines. The host serum or plasma is collected following an appropriate time interval to provide a composition comprising antibodies reactive with the virus particle. The gamma globulin fraction or the IgG
15 antibodies can be obtained, for example, by use of saturated ammonium sulfate or DEAE Sephadex, or other techniques known to those skilled in the art. The antibodies are substantially free of many of the adverse side effects which may be associated with other anti-viral agents such as
20 drugs.

The antibody compositions can be made even more compatible with the host system by minimizing potential adverse immune system responses. This is accomplished by removing all or a portion of the Fc portion of a foreign
25 species antibody or using an antibody of the same species as the host animal, for example, the use of antibodies from human/human hybridomas. Humanized antibodies (i.e., nonimmunogenic in a human) may be produced, for example, by replacing an immunogenic portion of an antibody with a
30 corresponding, but nonimmunogenic portion (i.e., chimeric antibodies). Such chimeric antibodies may contain the reactive or antigen binding portion of an antibody from one species and the Fc portion of an antibody (nonimmunogenic) from a different species. Examples of chimeric antibodies,
35 include but are not limited to, non-human mammal-human

° chimeras, rodent-human chimeras, murine-human and rat-human chimeras (Robinson et al., International Patent Application 184,187; Taniguchi M., European Patent Application 171,496; Morrison et al., European Patent Application 173,494; Neuberger et al., PCT Application WO 86/01533; Cabilly et al., 1987 Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 84:3439; Nishimura et al., 1987 Canc. Res. 47:999; Wood et al., 1985 Nature 314:446; Shaw et al., 1988 J. Natl. Cancer Inst. 80: 15553, all incorporated herein by reference).

General reviews of "humanized" chimeric antibodies are provided by Morrison S., 1985 Science 229:1202 and by Oi et al., 1986 BioTechniques 4:214.

Suitable "humanized" antibodies can be alternatively produced by CDR or CEA substitution (Jones et al., 1986 Nature 321:552; Verhoeyan et al., 1988 Science 239:1534; Biedler et al. 1988 J. Immunol. 141:4053, all incorporated herein by reference).

The antibodies or antigen binding fragments may also be produced by genetic engineering. The technology for expression of both heavy and light chain genes in E. coli is the subject of the PCT patent applications; publication number WO 901443, WO901443, and WO 9014424 and in Huse et al., 1989 Science 246:1275-1281.

The antibodies can also be used as a means of enhancing the immune response. The antibodies can be administered in amounts similar to those used for other therapeutic administrations of antibody. For example, pooled gamma globulin is administered at 0.02-0.1 ml/lb body weight during the early incubation period of other viral diseases such as rabies, measles and hepatitis B to interfere with viral entry into cells. Thus, antibodies reactive with the HEV virus particle can be passively administered alone or in conjunction with another anti-viral agent to a host infected with an HEV to enhance the effectiveness of an antiviral drug.

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Alternatively, anti-HEV antibodies can be induced by administering anti-idiotypic antibodies as immunogens. Conveniently, a purified anti-HEV antibody preparation prepared as described above is used to induce anti-idiotypic antibody in a host animal. The composition is administered to the host animal in a suitable diluent. Following administration, usually repeated administration, the host produces anti-idiotypic antibody. To eliminate an immunogenic response to the Fc region, antibodies produced by the same species as the host animal can be used or the FC region of the administered antibodies can be removed. Following induction of anti-idiotypic antibody in the host animal, serum or plasma is removed to provide an antibody composition. The composition can be purified as described above for anti-HEV antibodies, or by affinity chromatography using anti-HEV antibodies bound to the affinity matrix. The anti-idiotypic antibodies produced are similar in conformation to the authentic HEV-antigen and may be used to prepare an HEV vaccine rather than using an HEV particle antigen.

When used as a means of inducing antiviral antibodies in an animal, the manner of injecting the antibody is the same as for vaccination purposes, namely intramuscularly, intraperitoneally, subcutaneously or the like in an effective concentration in a physiologically suitable diluent with or without adjuvant. One or more booster injections may be desirable.

The HEV derived proteins of the invention are also intended for use in producing antiserum designed for pre- or post-exposure prophylaxis. Here an HEV protein, or mixture of proteins is formulated with a suitable adjuvant and administered by injection to human volunteers, according to known methods for producing human antisera. Antibody response to the injected proteins is monitored, during a several-week period following immunization, by periodic

- ° serum sampling to detect the presence of anti-HEV serum antibodies, using an immunoassay as described herein.

The antiserum from immunized individuals may be administered as a pre-exposure prophylactic measure for individuals who are at risk of contracting infection. The antiserum is also useful in treating an individual post-exposure, analogous to the use of high titer antiserum against hepatitis B virus for post-exposure prophylaxis. Of course, those of skill in the art would readily understand that immune globulin (HEV immune globulin) purified from the antiserum of immunized individuals using standard techniques may be used as a pre-exposure prophylactic measure or in treating individuals post-exposure.

For both in vivo use of antibodies to HEV virus-like particles and proteins and anti-idiotypic antibodies and diagnostic use, it may be preferable to use monoclonal antibodies. Monoclonal anti-virus particle antibodies or anti-idiotypic antibodies can be produced as follows. The splenocytes or lymphocytes from an immunized animal are removed and immortalized or used to prepare hybridomas by methods known to those skilled in the art. (Goding, J.W. 1983. Monoclonal Antibodies: Principles and Practice, Pladermic Press, Inc., NY, NY, pp. 56-97). To produce a human-human hybridoma, a human lymphocyte donor is selected. A donor known to be infected with HEV (where infection has been shown for example by the presence of anti-virus antibodies in the blood or by virus culture) may serve as a suitable lymphocyte donor. Lymphocytes can be isolated from a peripheral blood sample or spleen cells may be used if the donor is subject to splenectomy. Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) can be used to immortalize human lymphocytes or a human fusion partner can be used to produce human-human hybridomas. Primary in vitro immunization with peptides can also be used in the generation of human monoclonal antibodies.

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° Antibodies secreted by the immortalized cells are screened to determine the clones that secrete antibodies of the desired specificity. For monoclonal anti-virus particle antibodies, the antibodies must bind to HEV virus particles. For monoclonal anti-idiotypic antibodies, the antibodies must bind to anti-virus particle antibodies. Cells producing antibodies of the desired specificity are selected.

In another embodiment, monoclonal antibodies are derived by harvesting messenger RNA encoding V-genes of B cells from humans or chimpanzees who are immune to the antigen of interest. The messenger RNAs encoding the heavy and light chains of immunoglobins are amplified by reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction, combined at random and cloned into filamentous phage for display. The phage are then selected for carriage of antibodies of interest by "panning" on the antigen of choice, which is attached to a solid phase. The recovered phage that display the combining sites of antibodies homologous to the antigen are amplified and the antibody genes they carry are assembled to encode complete antibody molecules. Such antibodies, specific to the antigen of interest, are expressed in *E. coli*, purified and utilized as described above for human monoclonal antibodies. Generation of human monoclonal antibodies from combinatorial libraries is described, for example, in Hoogenboom, H.R., and Winter, G., (1992) Journal of Molecular Biology, volume 227, pages 381-388, and in Chanock, R.M., et al., (1993) *Infectious Agents and Disease*, volume 2, pages 118-131.

The above described antibodies and antigen binding fragments thereof may be supplied in kit form alone, or as a pharmaceutical composition for in vivo use. The antibodies may be used for therapeutic uses, diagnostic use in immunoassays or as an immunoaffinity agent to purify ORF proteins as described herein.

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Material

The materials used in the Examples were as follows:

Primates. Chimpanzee (Chimp) (*Pan troglodytes*). Old world monkeys: cynomolgus monkeys (Cyno) (*Macaca fascicularis*), rhesus monkeys (Rhesus) (*M. mulatta*), pigtail monkeys (PT) (*M. nemestrina*), and African green monkeys (AGM) (*Cercopithecus aethiops*). New World monkeys: mustached tamarins (Tam) (*Saguinus mystax*), squirrel monkeys (SQM) (*Saimiri sciureus*) and owl monkeys (OWL) (*Aotus trivigatus*). Primates were housed singly under conditions of biohazard containment. The housing, maintenance and care of the animals met or exceeded all requirements for primate husbandry.

Most animals were inoculated intravenously with HEV, strain SAR-55 contained in 0.5 ml of stool suspension diluted in fetal calf serum as described in Tsarev, S.A. et al. (1992), Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci USA, 89:559-563; and Tsarev, S.A. et al. (1993), J. Infect. Dis. (167:1302-1306). Chimp-1313 and 1310 were inoculated with a pool of stools collected from 7 Pakistani hepatitis E patients.

Serum samples were collected approximately twice a week before and after inoculation. Levels of the liver enzymes serum alanine amino transferase (ALT), isocitrate dehydrogenase (ICD), and gamma glutamyl transferase (GGT) were assayed with commercially available tests (Medpath Inc., Rockville, MD). Serologic tests were performed as described above.

EXAMPLE 1

Identification of the DNA Sequence of the
Genome of HEV Strain SAR-55.

Preparation of Virus RNA Template for PCR. Bile from an HEV-infected cynomolgus monkey (10 μ l), 20% (wt/vol) SDS (to a final concentration of 1%), proteinase K (10 mg/ml; to a final concentration of 1 mg/ml), 1 μ l of tRNA (10 mg/ml), and 3 μ l of 0.5 M EDTA were mixed in a final

° volume of 250 μ l and incubated for 30 min. at 55°C. Total nucleic acids were extracted from bile twice with phenol/chloroform, 1:1 (vol/vol), at 65°C and once with chloroform, then precipitated by ethanol, washed with 95% ethanol, and used for RT-PCR. RT-PCR amplification of HEV RNA from feces and especially from sera was more efficient when RNA was more extensively purified. Serum (100 μ l) or a 10% fecal suspension (200 μ l) was treated as above with proteinase K. After a 30-min incubation, 300 μ l of CHAOS buffer (4.2 M guanidine thiocyanate/0.5 N-lauroylsarcosine/0.025 M Tris-HCL, pH 8.0) was added. Nucleic acids were extracted twice with phenol/chloroform at 65°C followed by chloroform extraction at room temperature. Then 7.5 M ammonium acetate (225 μ l) was added to the upper phase and nucleic acids were precipitated with 0.68 ml of 2-propanol. The pellet was dissolved in 300 μ l CHAOS buffer and 100 μ l of H₂O was added. Chloroform extraction and 2-propanol precipitation were repeated. Nucleic acids were dissolved in water, precipitated with ethanol, washed with 95% ethanol, and used for RT-PCR.

20 *Primers.* Ninety-four primers, 21-40 nucleotides (nt) long, and complementary to plus or minus strands of the genome of a strain of HEV from Burma (BUR-121) (Tam, A.W. et al. (1991), *Virology*, 185:120-131) or the SAR-55 genome were synthesized using an Applied Biosystems model 391 DNA synthesizer.

The sequences of these 94 primers are shown below starting with SEQ. ID NO. 5 and continuing to SEQ. ID NO. 98:

HEV Primer List

Primer	ORF Region	Sequence	
D 3042 B	1	ACATTTGAATTCACAGACAT TGTGC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 5)
R 3043 B	1	ACACAGATCTGAGCTACATT CGTGAG	(SEQ. ID. NO. 6)

°	D 3044 B	1	AAAGGGATCCATGGTGTGTTG AGAATGZ	(SEQ. ID. NO. 7)
	R 3045 B	1	ACTCACTGCAGAGCACTATC GAATC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 8)
	R 261 S	1	CGGTAAACTGGTACTGCACA AC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 9)
5	D 260 S	1	AAGTCCCGCTCTATTACCCA AG	(SEQ. ID. NO. 10)
	D 259 S	1	ACCCACGGGTGTTGGTTTTT G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 11)
10	R 255 S	1	TTCTTGGGGCAGGTAGAGAA G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 12)
	R 254 S	2	TTATTGAATTCATGTCAACG GACGTC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 13)

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5	D	242	S	1	AATAATTCATGCCGTCGCTC C	(SEQ. ID. NO. 14)
	R	241	S	1	AAGCTCAGGAAGGTACAAC C	(SEQ. ID. NO. 15)
	R	231	S	1	AAATCGATGGCTGGGATCTG ATTC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 16)
	R	230	S	1	GAGGCATTGTAGAGCTTTGT G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 17)
	D	229	S	1	GATGTTGCACGGACAGCAAA TC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 18)
10	D	228	S	1	ATCTCCGATGCAATCGTTAA TAAC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 19)
	D	227	B	1	TAATCCATTCTGTGGCGAGA G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 20)
	R	218	B	2	AAGTGTGACCTTGGTCCAGT C	(SEQ. ID. NO. 21)
15	D	217	B	2	TTGCTCGTGCCACAATTCGC TAC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 22)
	D	211	B	1	CATTTCACTGAGTCAGTGAA GZ	(SEQ. ID. NO. 23)
20	D	202	B	2	TAATTATAACACCACTGCTA G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 24)
	R	201	B	2	GATTGCAATACCCTTATCCT G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 25)
25	R	200	S	1	ATTAAACCTGTATAGGGCAG AAC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 26)
	R	199	S	1	AAGTTCGATAGCCAGATTTG C	(SEQ. ID. NO. 27)
	R	198	S	2	TCATGTTGGTTGTCATAATC C	(SEQ. ID. NO. 28)
30	R	193	B	1	GATGACGCACTTCTCAGTGT G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 29)
	R	192	B	1	AGAACAACGAACGGAGAAC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 30)
35	D	191	B	1	AGATCCCAGCCATCGACTTT G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 31)

5	°	R	190	S	2	TAGTAGTGTAGGTGGAAATA G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 32)
		D	189	B	2	GTGTGGTTATTCAGGATTAT G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 33)
		D	188	B	2	ACTCTGTGACCTTGGTTAAT G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 34)
		R	187	S	2	AACTCAAGTTCGAGGGCAAA G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 35)
		D	186	S	2	CGCTTACCCTGTTTAACCTT G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 36)
10		D	185	B	2,3	ATCCCCCTATATTCATCCAAC CAAC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 37)
		D	184	S	2,3	CTCCTCATGTTTCTGCCTAT G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 38)
		R	181	S	2	GCCAGAACGAAATGGAGATA GC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 39)
15		R	180	B	1	CTCAGACATAAAACCTAAGT C	(SEQ. ID. NO. 40)
		D	179	S	1	TGCCCTATACAGGTTTAATC G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 41)
		D	178	B	1	ACCGGCATATACCAGGTGC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 42)
20		D	177	B	2	ACATGGCTCACTCGTAAATT C	(SEQ. ID. NO. 43)
		R	174	B	1	AACATTAGACGCGTTAACGA G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 44)
		D	173	S	1	CTCTTTTGATGCCAGTCAGA G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 45)
25		D	172	B	1	ACCTACCCGGATGGCTCTAA GG	(SEQ. ID. NO. 46)
		R	166	B	2	TATGGGAATTCGTGCCGTCC TGAAG (EcoRI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 47)
		R	143	B	1	AGTGGGAGCAGTATACCAGC G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 48)
30		D	141	B	1	CTGCTATTGAGCAGGCTGCT C	(SEQ. ID. NO. 49)

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0	R	142	S	1	GGGCCATTAGTCTCTAAAAC C	(SEQ. ID. NO. 50)
	D	135	B	1	GAGGTTTTCTGGAATCATC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 51)
	R	134	B	1	GCATAGGTGAGACTG	(SEQ. ID. NO. 52)
5	R	133	B	1	AGTTACAGCCAGAAAACC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 53)
	D	132	S	2,3	CCATGGATCCTCGGCCTATT TTGCTGTTGCTCC (Bam HI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 54)
	D	131	B	5'NC	AGGCAGACCACATATGTG	(SEQ. ID. NO. 55)
10	R	119	B	1	GGTGCACTCCTGACCAAGCC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 56)
	D	118	B	1	ATTGGCTGCCACTTTGTTC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 57)
	R	117	B	1	ACCCTCATACGTCACCACAA C	(SEQ. ID. NO. 58)
15	R	116	B	1	GCGGTGGACCACATTAGGAT TATC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 59)
	D	115	B	1	CATGATATGTCACCATCTG	(SEQ. ID. NO. 60)
	D	114	B	1	GTCATCCATAACGAGCTGG	(SEQ. ID. NO. 61)
20	R	112	B	2	AGCGGAATTTCGAGGGGCGGC ATAAAGAACCAGG (EcoRI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 62)
	R	111	B	2	GCGCTGAATTCGGATCACAA GCTCAGAGGCTATGCC (EcoRI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 63)
	D	110	B	2	GTATAACGGATCCACATCTC CCCTTACCTC (Bam HI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 64)
25	D	109	B	2	TAACCTGGATCCTTATGCCG CCCCTCTTAG (Bam HI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 65)
	D	108	B	1	AAATTGGATCCTGTGTCGGG TGGAATGAATAACATGTC (BamHI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 66)
30	R	107	B	1	ATCGGCAGATCTGATAGAGC GGGGACTTGCCGGATCC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 67)
	D	101	B	2	TACCCTGCCCGCGCCCATAC TTTTGATG	(SEQ. ID. NO. 68)
35	R	100	B	1	GGCTGAGATCTGGTTCGGGT CGCCAAGAAGGTG (Bgl II)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 69)

°	R	99 B	2	TACAGATCTATACTAACTTAA CAGTCGG (Bgl II)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 70)
	R	98 B	2	GCGGCAGATCTCACCAGACAC CATTAGTAC (Bgl II)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 71)
5	D	97 S	1	CCGTCGGATCCCAGGGGCTG CTGTCCTG (Bam HI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 72)
	R	96 B	2	AAAGGAATTCAAGACCAGAG GTAGCCTCCTC (EcoRI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 73)
	D	95 B	2	GTTGATATGAATTCAATAAC CTCGACGG	(SEQ. ID. NO. 74)
10	R	94 B	3'NC	TTTGGATCCTCAGGGAGCGC GGAACGCAGAAATGAG (BamHI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 75)
	D	90 B	2	TCACTCGTGAATTCCTATAC TAATAC (EcoRI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 76)
15	R	89 B	3'NC	TTTGGATCCTCAGGGAGCGC GGAACGCAGAAATG (BamHI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 77)
	R	88 B	1	TGATAGAGCGGGACTTGCCG GATCC (BamHI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 78)
	R	87 B	1	TTGCATTAGGTTAATGAGGA TCTC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 79)
20	D	86 B	1	ACCTGCTTCCTTCAGCCTGC AGAAG	(SEQ. ID. NO. 80)
	R	81 B	1	GCGGTGGATCCGCTCCCAGG CGTCAAAAC (BamHI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 81)
25	D	80 B	1	GGGCGGATCGAATTCGAGAC CCTTCTTGG (EcoRI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 82)
	R	79 B	1	AGGATGGATCCATAAGTTAC CGATCAG (BamHI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 83)
	D	78 B	1	GGCTGGAATTCCTCTGAGGA CGCCCTCAC (EcoRI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 84)
30	R	77 B	1	GCCGAAGATCTATCGGACAT AGACCTC (Bgl II)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 85)
	R	76 B	2	CAGACGACGGATCCCCTTGG ATATAGCCTG (BamHI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 86)

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0	D	75 B	5'NC	GGCCGAATTCAGGCAGACCA CATATGTGGTCGATGCCATG (EcoRI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 87)
	D	72 B	1	GCAGGTGTGCCTGGATCCGG CAAGT (BamHI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 88)
5	R	71 B	1	GTTAGAATTCGGGCCAGCT GTGGTAGGTC (EcoRI)	(SEQ. ID. NO. 89)
	D	63 B	1	CCGTCCGATTGGTCTGTATG CAGG	(SEQ. ID. NO. 90)
	D	61 B	1	TACCAGTTTACTGCAGGTGT GC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 91)
10	D	60 B	1	CAAGCCGATGTGGACGTTGT CG	(SEQ. ID. NO. 92)
	R	59 B	2,3	GGCGCTGGGCCTGGTCACGC CAAG	(SEQ. ID. NO. 93)
15	D	50 B	1	GCAGAACTAGTGTGACCC AG	(SEQ. ID. NO. 94)
	R	49 B	2	TAGGTCTACGACGTGAGGCA AC	(SEQ. ID. NO. 95)
	R	48 B	1	TACAATCTTTCAGGAAGAAG G	(SEQ. ID. NO. 96)
20	R	47 B	1	CCCACACTCCTCCATAATAG C	(SEQ. ID. NO. 97)
	D	46 B	1	GATAGTGCTTTGCAGTGAGT ACCG	(SEQ. ID. NO. 98)

25 The abbreviations to the left of the sequences
represent the following: R and D refer to reverse and
forward primers, respectively; B and S refer to sequences
derived from the Burma-121 Strain of Hepatitis E and the
SAR-55 Strain of Hepatitis E, respectively; 5'NC and 3'NC
30 refer to 5 prime and 3 prime non-coding regions of the HEV
genome, respectively; and 1, 2 and 3 refer to sequence
derived from open reading frames 1, 2 or 3, respectively.
The symbol () to the right of some sequences shown indicates
insertion of an artificial restriction site into these
35 sequences.

For cloning of PCR fragments, *EcoRI*, *BamHI*, or *BglIII* restriction sites preceded by 3-7 nt were added to the 5' end of primers.

RT-PCR. The usual 100- μ l RT-PCR mixture contained template, 10 mM Tris-HCL (ph 8.4), 50 mM KCl, 2.5 mM MgCl₂, all four dNTPs (each at 0.2 mM), 50 pmol of direct primer, 50 pmol of reverse primer, 40 units of RNasin (Promega), 16 units of avian myeloblastosis virus reverse transcriptase (Promega), 4 units of AmpliTaq (Cetus), under 100 μ l of light mineral oil. The mixture was incubated 1 h at 42°C and then amplified by 35 PCR cycles; 1 min at 94°C, 1 min at 45°C, and 1 min at 72°C. The PCR products were analyzed on 1% agarose gels.

Cloning of PCR Fragments. PCR fragments containing restriction sites at the ends were digested with *EcoRI* and *BamHI* or *EcoRI* and *BglIII* restriction enzymes and cloned in *EcoRI*/*BamHI*-digested pBR322 or pGEM-3Z (Promega). Alternatively, PCR fragments were cloned into pCR1000 (Invitrogen) using the TA cloning kit (Invitrogen).

Sequencing of PCR Fragments and Plasmids. PCR fragments were excised from 1% agarose gels and purified by Geneclean (Bio 101, La Jolla, CA). Double-stranded PCR fragments were sequenced by using Sequenase (United States Biochemical) as described in Winship, P.R. (1984), Nucleic Acids Rev., 17:1266. Double-stranded plasmids purified through CsCl gradients were sequenced with a Sequenase kit (United States Biochemical).

Computer Analysis of Sequences. Nucleotide sequences of HEV strains were compared using the Genetics Computer Group (Madison, WI) software package (Devereaux, J. et al. (1984), Nucleic Acids Rev., 12:387-395, version 7.5, on a VAX 8650 computer (at the National Cancer Institute, Frederick, MD)).

EXAMPLE 2

Construction of a Recombinant Expression Vector, P63-2.

A plasmid containing the complete ORF-2 of the genome of HEV strain SAR-55, Tsarev, S.A. et al. (1992), Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA, 89:559-563), was used to obtain
5 a restriction fragment NruI-BglII. NruI cut the HEV cDNA five nucleotides upstream of the ATG initiation codon of ORF-2. An artificial Bgl II site previously had been placed at the 3' end of HEV genome just before the poly A sequence (Tsarev, S.A. et al. (1992), Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci.
10 USA, 89:559-563). To insert this fragment into pBlueBac-Transfer vector (Invitrogen) a synthetic polylinker was introduced into the unique NheI site in the vector. This polylinker contained Bln I and Bgl II sites which are absent in both HEV cDNA and pBlueBac sequences. The NruI-BglII
15 ORF-2 fragment was inserted in Bln I-BglII pBlueBac using an adapter as shown in Fig. 1.

EXAMPLE 3

Expression of P63-2 in SF9 Insect Cells.

p63-2 and AcMNPV baculovirus DNA (Invitrogen) were
20 cotransfected into SF9 cells (Invitrogen) by the Ca precipitation method according to the Invitrogen protocol - By following this protocol; the AcMNPV baculovirus DNA can produce a live intact baculovirus which can package p63-2 to form a recombinant baculovirus. This recombinant
25 baculovirus was plaque-purified 4 times. The resulting recombinant baculovirus 63-2-IV-2 was used to infect SF9 cells.

SDS-PAGE and Western blot. Insect cells were resuspended in loading buffer (50 mM Tris-HCl, pH 6.8, 100
30 mM DTT, 2% SDS, 0.1% bromphenol blue and 10% glycerol) and SDS-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis was performed as described, Laemmli, U.K. (1970), Nature, 227:680. Gels were stained with coomassie blue or proteins were electroblotted onto BA-85 nitrocellulose filters (Schleicher & Schuell).
35 After transfer, nitrocellulose membranes were blocked in PBS

° containing 10% fetal calf serum and 0.5% gelatin. As a primary antibody, hyperimmune serum of chimpanzee-1313 diluted 1:1000 was used. As a secondary antibody, phosphatase-labeled affinity-purified goat antibody to human IgG (Kirkegaard & Perry Laboratories, Inc.) diluted 1:2000 was used. Filters were developed in Western blue stabilized substrate for alkaline phosphatase (Promega). All incubations were performed in blocking solution, and washes were with PBS with 0.05% Tween-20 (Sigma).

Expression of HEV ORF-2. The major protein synthesized in SF9 cells infected with recombinant baculovirus 63-2-IV-2 was a protein with an apparent molecular weight of 74 KD (Fig. 2A, lane 3). This size is a little larger than that predicted for the entire ORF-2 (71 KD). The size difference could be due to glycosylation of the protein since there is at least one potential site of glycosylation (Asn-Leu-Ser) in the N-terminal part. This protein was not detected in noninfected cells (Figure 2A, lane 1) or in cells infected with wild-type nonrecombinant baculovirus (Figure 2A, lane 2). In the latter case, the major protein detected was a polyhedron protein. When the same lysates were analyzed by Western blot (Figure 2B) with serum of chimp-1313 (hyperimmunized with HEV), only proteins in the recombinant cell lysate reacted (lane 3) and the major band was again represented by a 74 KD protein (Fig. 2B). Minor bands of about, 25, 29, 35, 40-45 and 55-70 kDa present in the Coomassie-stained gel (Fig. 2A, lane 3) also reacted with serum in the Western blot (Figure 2B, lane 3). Some of the bands having molecular weights higher than 74 KD result from different extents of glycosylation while the lower molecular weight bands could reflect processing and/or degradation. Serum drawn from Chimp-1313 prior to inoculation with HEV did not react with any of the proteins by Western blot.

EXAMPLE 4

Immunoelectron Microscopy of
Recombinant Infected SF9 Cells.

5x10⁶ recombinant infected SF9 cells were sonicated in CsCl (1.30 g/ml) containing 10 mM Tris-HCl, pH 7.4, 0.3% sarcosyl and centrifuged 68 h, at 40,000 rpm (SW60Ti). 50 ul of the fraction, which had the highest ELISA response and a buoyant density of 1.30 g/ml was diluted in 1 ml PBS and 5 ul of chimp-1313 hyperimmune serum was added. The hyperimmune serum was prepared by rechallenging a previously infected chimp with a second strain of hepatitis E (Mexican HEV). Samples were incubated 1 h at room temperature and then overnight at 4°C. Immune complexes were precipitated using a SW60Ti rotor at 30,000 rpm, 4°C, 2 h. Pellets were resuspended in distilled water, negatively stained with 3% PTA, placed on carbon grids and examined at a magnification of 40,000 in an electron microscope EM-10, Carl Zeiss, Oberkochen, Germany.

Detection of VLPs. Cell lysates from insect cells infected with wild-type or recombinant baculovirus 63-2-IV-2 were fractionated by CsCl density centrifugation. When fractions of the CsCl gradient from the recombinant infected insect cells were incubated with Chimp-1313 hyperimmune serum, two kinds of virus-like particles (VLP) covered with antibody were observed in the fraction with buoyant density of 1.30 g/ml: first (Fig. 3A), antibody covered individual particles that had a size (30 nm) and morphological structure suggestive of HEV, second (Fig. 3B), antibody-coated aggregates of particles smaller than HEV (about 20 nm) but which otherwise resembled HEV. Direct EM showed the presence of a very heterogenous population of objects including some of 30 and 20 nm in diameter respectively, which looked like virus particles but, in the absence of bound antibody, could not be confirmed as HEV. A number of IEM experiments suggested that at least some of the protein(s) synthesized from the ORF-2 region of the HEV

° genome, had assembled into a particulate structure. It was observed that insect cells at a later stage of infection, when the proportion of smaller proteins was higher, consistently gave better results in ELISA. Therefore, unfractionated lysates of recombinant insect cells from a later stage of infection were used as antigen in ELISA in subsequent tests.

EXAMPLE 5

Detection by ELISA Based on Antigen from Insect Cells Expressing Complete ORF-2 of Anti-HEV Following Infection with Different Strains of HEV.

10 5x10⁶ SF9 cells infected with 63-2-IV-2 virus were resuspended in 1 ml of 10 mM Tris-HCl, pH 7.5, 0.15M NaCl then were frozen and thawed 3 times. 10 ul of this suspension was dissolved in 10 ml of carbonate buffer (pH 9.6) and used to cover one flexible microliter assay plate (Falcon).
15 Serum samples were diluted 1:20, 1:400 and 1:8000, or 1:100, 1:1000 and 1:10000. The same blocking and washing solutions as described for the Western blot were used in ELISA. As a secondary antibody, peroxidase-conjugated goat IgG fraction to human IgG or horse radish peroxidase-labelled goat anti-
20 Old or anti-New World monkey immunoglobulin was used. The results were determined by measuring the optical density (O.D.) at 405 nm.

To determine if insect cell-derived antigen representing a Pakistani strain of HEV could detect anti-HEV
25 antibody in cynomolgus monkeys infected with the Mexican strain of HEV, 3 monkeys were examined (Fig. 4). Two monkeys cyno-80A82 and cyno-9A97, were infected with feces containing the Mexico '86 HEV strain (Ticehurst, J. et al. (1992), J. Infect. Dis., 165:835-845) and the third monkey
30 cyno-83 was infected with a second passage of the same strain. As a control, serum samples from cyno-374, infected with the Pakistani HEV strain SAR-55, were tested in the same experiment. All 3 monkeys infected with the Mexican strain seroconverted to anti-HEV. Animals from the first
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- ° passage seroconverted by week 15 and from the second passage by week 5. Interestingly, the highest anti-HEV titer among the 4 animals, was found in cyno-83, inoculated with the second passage of the Mexican strain. Cynos inoculated with the first passage of the Mexican strain developed the lowest titers while those inoculated with the first passage of the Pakistani strain developed intermediate titers.

EXAMPLE 6

Specificity of Anti-HEV ELISA Based on Antigen from Insect Cells Expressing Complete ORF-2.

- 10 To estimate if the ELISA described here specifically detected anti-HEV to the exclusion of any other type of hepatitis related antibody, serum samples of chimps were analyzed, in sets of four, infected with the other known hepatitis viruses (Garci, P. et al. (1992), J. Infect. Dis., 165:1006-1011; Farci, P. et al. (1992), Science (in press); Ponzetto, A. et al. (1987) J Infect. Dis., 155: 72-77; Rizzetto; m.et al. (1981) Hepatology 1: 567-574; reference for chimps - 1413, 1373, 1442, 1551 (HAV); and for chimps - 982, 1442, 1420, 1410 (HBV); is unpublished data from Purcell et al) (Table 1). Samples of pre-inoculation and 5 week and 15 week post-inoculation sera were analyzed in HEV ELISA at serum dilutions of 1:100, 1:1000 and 1:10000. None of the sera from animals infected with HAV, HBV, HCV and HDV reacted in the ELISA for HEV antibody, but all 4 chimps inoculated with HEV developed the IgM and IgG classes of anti-HEV.

Table 1. Serological assay of anti-HEV antibody in chimpanzees infected with different hepatitis viruses (Hepatitis A, B, C, D, E)

chimp	inocu- lated virus	week of serocon- version for ino- culated virus	preserum		weeks post-inoculation					
			IgG	IgM	5		15		20/25	
					IgG	IgM	IgG	IgM	IgG	IgM
Chimp-1413	HAV	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chimp-1373	HAV	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chimp-1442	HAV	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chimp-1451	HAV	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chimp-982	HBV	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chimp-1442	HBV	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chimp-1420	HBV	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chimp-1410	HBV	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chimp-51	HCV	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chimp-502	HCV	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chimp-105	HCV	28	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chimp-793	HCV	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chimp-904	HDV	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chimp-814	HDV	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chimp-800	HDV	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chimp-29	HDV	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chimp-1310	HEV	5	-	-	1:10,000	1:100	1:10,000	1:10,000	-	-
Chimp-1374	HEV	3	-	-	1:8000	*	1:8000	1:8000	-	-
Chimp-1375	HEV	3	-	-	1:8000	1:400	1:400	1:400	-	-

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- 55 -

Table 1 (cont'd.)

Chimp-1313	HEV1st*** 5	-	-	1:10,000	1:100	1:1000	-
Chimp-1313	HEV2nd*** 0.5	1:100	-	1:10,000	-	1:10,000	-

* Chimp-1374 was positive for Igm anti-HEV three and four weeks post-inoculation (see Fig.5)

** Chimp-1313 was inoculated with HEV twice. 1st inoculation with pooled samples of 7 Pakistani patients. 2nd inoculation 45 months later with Mexican strain of HEV.

EXAMPLE 7

Determination of the Host Range of the
SAR-55 Strain of HEV in Non-Human Primates.

Different primate species were inoculated intravenously with a standard stool suspension of HEV and serial serum samples were collected to monitor for infection. Serum ALT levels were determined as an indicator of hepatitis while seroconversion was defined as a rise in anti-HEV. The results were compared with those obtained in cynomolgus monkeys and chimpanzees.

Both rhesus monkeys inoculated with HEV (Table 2) demonstrated very prominent peaks of alanine aminotransferase activity as well as a strong anti-HEV response. The peak of alanine aminotransferase activity was observed on day 35 for both animals, and seroconversion occurred on day 21. The maximum titer of anti-HEV was reached on day 29. Both African green monkeys used in this study (Table 2) developed increased alanine aminotransferase activity and anti-HEV. Although African green monkey 230 died 7 weeks after inoculation, proof of infection was obtained before that time. Peak alanine aminotransferase activity for monkey 74 exceeded the mean value of preinoculation sera by about three times and for monkey 230 by about five times. Peaks of alanine aminotransferase activity and seroconversion appeared simultaneously on days 28 and 21 in monkeys 74 and 230, respectively.

° Table 2. Biochemical and serologic profiles of HEV infection in eight primate species.

	Animal	Alanine aminotransferase (units/L)		Anti-HEV IgG	
		Preinoculation, mean (SD)	Day	Value	Day first detected (titer) Maximum titer
5	Chimpanzee				
	1374	51(12)	27	114	27(1:400) 1:8000
	1375	41(14)	27	89	27(1:400) 1:8000
	Cynomolgus monkey				
10	374*	46(20)	26	608	19(1:400) 1:8000
	381*	94(19)	35	180	28(1:20) 1:8000
	Rhesus monkey				
	726	43(6)	35	428	21(1:20) 1:8000
	938	29(10)	35	189	21(1:20) 1:8000
15	African green monkey				
	74	72(21)	28	141	28(1:400) 1:8000
	230	102(45)	21	334	21(1:8000) 1:8000
	Pigtail macaque				
20	98	37(8)	21	47	21(1:400) 1:8000
	99	41(6)	28	59	21(1:400) 1:8000
	Tamarin				
	616	28(7)	70	41	-
	636	19(4)	7, 56	30	-
25	Squirrel monkey				
	868	90(35)	40	355	41(1:20) 1:20
	869	127(63)	42	679	35(1:20) 1:20
	Owl monkey				
	924	41(7)	35	97	21(1:20) 1:8000
30	925	59(6)	49, 91†	78,199†	21(1:20) 1:8000

NOTE. -, no anti-HEV detected.

* Previously studied using fragments of HEV proteins expressed in bacteria as antigen [18].

† Biomodal elevation of alanine aminotransferase.

SD = standard deviation.

° Pigtail macaque 99 demonstrated an increase in alanine aminotransferase activity > 3 SD above the mean value of preinoculation sera, while pigtail macaque 98 did not. However, both monkeys seroconverted on day 21 and the anti-HEV titers were equivalent to those of the chimpanzees and Old World monkeys. Because of the low peak alanine aminotransferase values in the pigtail macaques, the possibility of immunization instead of infection with HEV cannot be completely ruled out. However, immunization is unlikely for several reasons. First, immunization in either of 2 tamarins, which are only one-fourth as large as the pigtail macaques but received the same amount of inoculum was not observed. Second, it is well known that the amount of HEV excreted in feces is usually very small, and 0.5 mL of the 10% suspension of feces used in this study is unlikely to contain an amount of antigen sufficient to immunize an animal, especially when inoculated intravenously.

Neither tamarin inoculated in this study had a significant rise in alanine aminotransferase activity or development of anti-HEV (Table 2). Therefore, these animals did not appear to be infected. The squirrel monkeys did develop anti-HEV, but at significantly lower levels than chimpanzees or Old World monkeys (Table 2). In addition, seroconversion occurred later in other animals. Squirrel monkey 868 seroconverted on day 41 and 869 on day 35. The anti-HEV titer was not > 1:20 at any time during > 3 months of monitoring and clearly was waning in both animals after reaching a peak value on days 47-54. However, the increases in alanine aminotransferase activity were rather prominent in both animals and were temporally related to the time of seroconversion.

The owl monkeys responded to HEV infection about as well as the Old World monkey species (Table 2). Both owl monkeys seroconverted on day 21 and by day 28 the anti-HEV titer had reached a value of 1:8000. Alanine amino-

- ° transferase activity peaked on day 35 in owl monkey 924 but not until day 49 in monkey 925.

EXAMPLE 8

Detection of IgM and IgG Anti-HEV in Chimps.

- In both chimps, the serum ALT levels increased about 4 weeks post-inoculation (Table 2, Fig. 5). Both chimps seroconverted at the time of ALT enzyme elevation or earlier (Fig. 5A, 5C). Levels of IgM anti-HEV also were determined for the chimps. In chimp-1374, the titer of IgM anti-HEV (Fig 5B) was not as high as the IgG titer (Fig 5A) and waned over two weeks. Although both IgG and IgM antibodies were first detected for this animal on day 20, the titer of IgM anti-HEV was the highest while the titer of IgG was the lowest on that day, but then rose and stayed approximately at the same level for more than three months. In chimp-1375, only IgM anti-HEV was detected on day 20 (Fig. 5D). The titer was higher than in chimp-1374 and IgM anti-HEV was detected during the entire period of monitoring. IgG anti-HEV was first observed in this animal on day 27 (Fig. 5C) and remained at approximately the same level throughout the experiment.

EXAMPLE 9

Comparison of ELISA Based on Complete ORF-2 Protein Expressed in Insect Cells With That Based on Fragments of Structural Proteins Expressed in E. coli.

- To estimate if expression of the complete ORF-2 region of the HEV genome in eukaryotic cells had any advantage over expression of fragments of structural proteins in *E. coli*, we used the former antigen in ELISA to retest cynomolgus monkey sera that had been analyzed earlier (Tsarev, S.A. et al. (1992), Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci USA, 89:559-563; and Tsarev, S.A. et al. (1993) J. Infect. Dis. (167:1302-1306)), using the antigen fragments expressed in bacteria (Table 3).

Table 3. Comparison of ELISA based on antigen from insect cells expressing complete ORF-2 with that based on antigen from E.coli expressing fragments of structural proteins

Cyno #	antigen derived from bacterial cells (Portion of ORF-2)*	antigen derived from insect cells (Complete ORF-2)		
		anti-HEV		
	day anti- HEV first detected	first detected day	titer	max. titer
Cyno-376	28	21	1:400	1:8000
Cyno-369	54	40	1:100	1:8000
Cyno-374	19	19	1:400	1:8000
Cyno-375	26	26	1:400	1:8000
Cyno-379	21	19	1:100	1:8000
Cyno-381	28	28	1:400	1:8000

*The sera were also tested with less sensitive ORF-3 antigen.

Tsarev, S.A. et al. (1993), J. Infect. Dis. 168:369-378

For 3 of the 6 monkeys examined by ELISA, the antigen expressed in insect cells detected seroconversion earlier than the antigen expressed in *E. coli*. Using the insect cell-derived antigen, we were able to detect anti-HEV antibody in sera from all six monkeys at the highest dilution tested (1:8000). With *E. coli*-cell derived antigen (Burma Strain) no information about anti-HEV titers were obtained, since all sera were tested only at a dilution of 1:100 (Tsarev, SA et al (1992) Proc. Nat. Acad. Sci. USA; 89:559-563; Tsarev et al. (1993) J. Infect. Dis. (167:1302-1306)).

In another study, hepatitis E virus, strain SAR-55 was serially diluted in 10-fold increments and the 10⁻¹ through 10⁻⁵ dilutions were inoculated into pairs of cynomolgus monkeys to titer the virus. The serum ALT levels were measured to determine hepatitis and serum antibody to HEV was determined by the ELISA method of the present invention (data in figures) or by Genelab's ELISA (three ELISAs, each based on one of the antigens designated 4-2, 3-

2 and 612 in Yarbrough et al. (J. Virol., (1991) 65:5790-5797) (data shown as positive (+) or negative (-) test at bottom of Figures 6 a-g). All samples were tested under code.

The ELISA method of the present invention detected seroconversion to IgG anti-HEV in all cynos inoculated and all dilutions of virus.

In contrast, Genelab's results were strikingly variable, as summarized below.

Table 4.

Dilution of Virus	Genelab's ELISA	ELISA of Present Invention
10 ⁻¹	did not test	positive
10 ⁻²	positive for both animals, limited duration	positive
10 ⁻³	negative for both animals	positive
10 ⁻⁴	Cyno 389: positive for IgM and IgG	positive
	Cyno 383: negative	positive
10 ⁻⁵	Cyno 386: negative	positive
	Cyno 385: positive	positive

Since Cyno 385 (10⁻⁵) was positive in ELISA tests both by Genelabs and the present invention, the 10⁻⁴ (ten times more virus inoculated) and 10⁻³ (100 times more virus inoculated) would also have been expected to be positive. The present invention scored them as positive in contrast to Genelab's ELISA test which missed both positives at 10⁻³ and one at 10⁻⁴ even though the ALT levels of Cyno 383 and 393 suggested active hepatitis. Therefore, the data support the advantages of the present ELISA method over the prior art methods of detecting antibodies to HEV.

EXAMPLE 10

*Comparison Of ELISAs Based On Recombinant
ORF-2 Antigens Consisting Of Either A 55 kDa Protein
Expressed From The Complete ORF-2 Region Of The
Pakistani SAR-55 Strain Of HEV Or Of Shorter Regions
Of ORF-2 Expressed As Fusion Proteins In Bacteria.*

5 As described in Example 3 and as shown in Figures
2A and 2B, a number of proteins of varying molecular weights
are expressed in insect cells infected with the recombinant
baculovirus containing the complete ORF-2. A protein with
a molecular weight of approximately 55 kDa was partially
10 purified from 5×10^8 SF-9 cells harvested seven days post-
inoculation as follows: The infected cells were
centrifuged, resuspended in 10 ml of 10 mM Tris-HCl (pH
8.0), 50 mM NaCl, containing 40 μ g/ml of
phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride (Sigma, St. Louis, Missouri),
15 sonicated to disrupt the cells and the lysate was
centrifuged at $90,000 \times g$ at $4^\circ C$ for 30 min. The supernatant
was loaded onto a DEAE-sepharose CL-6B (Pharmacia, Uppsala,
Sweden) column equilibrated with 10 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.0),
50 mM NaCl. The column was washed with loading buffer and
20 the 55 kDa protein was eluted in 10 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.0) 250
mM NaCl. Fractions containing the 55 kDa protein were
combined and the protein was precipitated by addition of 3
g of $(NH_4)_2SO_4$ to 10 ml of the protein solution. The protein
pellet was dissolved in 10 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.0), 50 mM NaCl.
25 The 55 kDa protein was then used as the insect cell-
expressed HEV antigen in ELISA in comparison testing against
ELISAs based on either one of two HEV antigens expressed in
bacteria, (3-2 (Mexico) (Goldsmith et al., (1992) Lancet,
339:328-331) or SG3 (Burma) (Yarbough et al., (1993) Assay
30 development of diagnostics tests for hepatitis E. In
"International Symposium on Viral Hepatitis and Liver
Disease. Scientific program and abstract volume."
Tokyo:VHFL, p 87, Abstract # 687). These bacterial antigens
were fusion proteins of the 26 kDa glutathione-S-transferase
35 (GST) and either the antigenic sequence 3-2 (M) consisting

° of 42 amino acids located 6 amino acids upstream of the C-terminus of ORF-2 (Yarborough et al., (1991) J. Virol., 65:5790-5797) or the 327 C-terminal amino acids of ORF-2 (Yarborough et al., (1993)). The ELISAs were carried out as follows.

5 Sixty ng per well of the 55 kDa protein or 200 ng per well of the fusion antigens in carbonate buffer (pH 9.6) were incubated in wells of a polystyrene microtiter assay plate (Dynateck, S. Windham, ME) for 2 h at 37°C. Plates were blocked with PBS containing 10% fetal calf serum and
10 0.5% gelatin. Serum samples from cynomolgus monkeys inoculated intravenously (note: cynos 387 and 392 were inoculated orally) with a dilution of feces containing the SAR-55 strain of HEV ranging from 10^{-1} through 10^{-8} as indicated in Table 5 and Figures 7A-7J and 8A-8D were
15 diluted 1:100 in blocking solution. Peroxidase-conjugated goat anti-human IgM (Zymed, San Francisco, CA) diluted 1:1000 or 1:2000, or peroxidase-labelled goat anti-human immunoglobulin diluted 1:1000 was used as the detector antibody.

20 In all of the ELISA tests except those for the two orally inoculated monkeys, cyno-387 and cyno-392, the 55 kDa and the fusion antigens were tested concurrently in the same laboratory so that the only variable was the antigen used. Criteria for scoring positive reactions in anti-HEV ELISA
25 with the 55 kDa antigen were an optical density value ≥ 0.2 and greater than twice that of a pre-inoculation serum sample for the same animal. In addition, since both antigens expressed in bacteria were fusion proteins with GST, the optical density of a sample tested with these
30 antigens had to be 3 times higher than that obtained with non-fused GST in order to be considered positive (Goldsmith et al., (1992)).

RESULTS

35 Both cynomolgus monkeys (377, 378) inoculated with the 10^{-1} dilution of the standard HEV fecal suspension had a

- ° pronounced increase in ALT activity at 4-5 weeks post-inoculation, indicative of hepatitis (Table 5, Figures 7A and 7B) .

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Table 5. Summary of biochemical and serological events occurring in cynomolgus monkeys after inoculation with 10^{-1} to 10^{-8} dilutions of the standard stock of the SAR-55 HEV inoculum.

Dilution of viral stock	ALT			weeks post-inoculation anti-HEV was detected with 55 kDa antigen		weeks post-inoculation anti-HEV was detected with fusion antigen			
	pre-inoculation mean (SD) [†]	peak week	peak value (U/L)	IgG	IgM	IgG		IgM	
						SG3	3-2(M)	SG3	3-2(M)
Cyno inoculum									
377 10^{-1}	76 (39)	5	264	4-15 [†]	3-7	4-10	4-5	3-4	3-5
378 10^{-1}	50 (9)	4	285	4-15	-	-	-	-	-
394 10^{-2}	62 (14)	4	89	3-15	3-10	-	4-6	-	-
395 10^{-2}	121 (21)	15	314	5-15	-	-	-	-	-
380 10^{-3}	89 (20)	1	135	5-15*	-	6-15	-	-	-
383 10^{-3}	29 (8)	4	77	5-15	5-13	-	-	-	-
389 10^{-4}	60 (7)	15	114	6-15	6-8	-	-	-	-
393 10^{-4}	41 (4)	5	87	6-15	-	-	-	-	-
385 10^{-5}	59 (32)	7	56	11-15	-	-	7-15	-	-
386 10^{-5}	31 (4)	4	34	8-15	8-13	-	-	-	-
397 10^{-6}	60 (4)	8	94	-	-	-	-	-	-
398 10^{-6}	36 (3)	2	55	-	-	-	-	-	-
399 10^{-7}	102 (16)	2	93	-	-	-	-	-	-
400 10^{-7}	57 (4)	9	188	-	-	-	-	-	-
403 10^{-8}	33 (3)	2-3	49	-	-	-	-	-	-
406 10^{-8}	56 (4)	2	73	-	-	-	-	-	-
387 10^{-1} (oral) [‡]	32 (4)	4	38	-	-	ND	-	ND	-
392 10^{-1} (oral) [‡]	49 (6)	3	70	-	-	ND	-	ND	-

[†] ALT mean and standard deviation (SD) values of pre-inoculation sera.

[‡] The experiment was terminated after 15 weeks.

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Table 5 (cont'd.)

* The OD values of pre-inoculation sera of Cyno-380, when tested by ELISA with 55 kDa antigen, were twice as high as the mean value of pre-inoculation sera for other cynomolgus monkeys.
 ‡ All ELISA tests except for Cyno-387 and Cyno-392 were performed in the same experiments.
 - not detected. ND - not done.

° All 3 antigens tested detected IgM anti-HEV in samples taken from cyno-377 3 weeks post-inoculation (Table 5, Figure 8A), but IgM anti-HEV was not detected in any samples from the second animal, cyno-378. IgG anti-HEV was detected in both animals with the 55 kDa-based ELISA, but only in cyno-377 with the ELISA based on fusion antigens. Values of OD for IgG anti-HEV were significantly higher than those for IgM anti-HEV. ELISA values obtained with the 55 kDa antigen were also significantly higher than those obtained with either of the two fusion antigens (Figures 7A and 7B). The patterns of the OD values observed in ELISA with antigens from the two sources also differed significantly. In the case of ELISA based on the fusion antigens, positive signals reached a maximum shortly after seroconversion and then waned during the 15 weeks of the experiment. In ELISA based on the 55 kDa antigen, the positive signal reached a maximum shortly after seroconversion and remained at approximately the same high level throughout the experiment (15 weeks).

Elevation in ALT activities in both monkeys (394 and 395) inoculated with a 10^{-2} dilution of the standard HEV stool suspension was significantly less pronounced at the expected time of hepatitis than in animals inoculated with the ten-fold higher dose (Table 5, Figures 7C and 7D). Cyno-395 actually had higher ALT activities prior to inoculation as well as at 15 weeks post-inoculation. The latter was probably not related to HEV infection. Weakly positive IgM anti-HEV was detected only in cyno-394 (Figure 8B) and only with ELISA based on the 55 kDa antigen. Both animals were infected, however, since IgG anti-HEV seroconversion was detected in both animals. In cyno-394, anti-HEV IgG was first detected by the 55 kDa antigen at week 3 and one week later with the 3-2(M) antigen. The SG3 (B) antigen did not detect seroconversion in cyno-395 and anti-HEV IgG was detected only with the 55 kDa antigen.

- ° Anti-HEV tended to diminish in titer with time in this animal.

Cyno-380 and cyno-383 were inoculated with a 10^{-3} dilution of the standard HEV fecal suspension (Table 5, Figures 7E 7F, 8C). Cyno-380 had fluctuating ALT activities before and after inoculation; therefore, ALT levels could not be used to document hepatitis E in this animal. In Cyno-383, a slight rise of ALT activities was observed (Figure 7F), which was coincident with seroconversion and, therefore, might be due to mild hepatitis E. IgM Anti-HEV was not detected in sera from cyno-380 with any of the three antigens. Cyno-380 seroconverted for IgG anti-HEV when tested by ELISA with SG3 (B) but not with 3-2(M) antigen. This animal had preexisting IgG anti-HEV when tested with the 55 kDa antigen, but there was a large increase in IgG anti-HEV starting at week 5 (Figure 7E). Identification of preexisting antibody was reported earlier in sera from another cynomolgus monkey [Ticehurst et al., (1992) J. Infect. Dis., 165:835-845; Tsarev et al., (1993) J. Infect. Dis., 168:369-378]. Seroconversion occurred at the expected time but the levels of IgG anti-HEV in samples from cyno-383 remained low and detectable only with the 55 kDa antigen.

Cyno-389 and cyno-393 were inoculated with a 10^{-4} dilution of the standard HEV fecal suspension (Figures 7G, 7H, 8D, Table 5). Neither animal had a significant rise in ALT activities, although the timing of a small but distinct ALT peak in sera of cyno-393 at week 5 (Figure 7H) suggested borderline hepatitis. ELISA based on the SG3 (B) or 3-2(M) antigens scored both animals as negative for HEV infection. In contrast, the 55 kDa antigen detected IgM anti-HEV in sera of cyno-389 at weeks 6-8 post-inoculation (Figure 8D) and IgG anti-HEV from week 6 through week 15 in both animals.

Neither animal inoculated with the 10^{-5} dilution of the standard fecal suspension developed a noticeable rise in ALT activities (Figure 7I, 7J, Table 5), but, in cyno-

° 386, IgM and IgG anti-HEV were detected at weeks 8-13 and 8-15 respectively with the 55 kDa antigen (Figure 7J, 8E). Cyno-385 anti-HEV IgG was detected with the 55 kDa and the 3-2(M) antigen but not with SG3 (B) antigen. In contrast to previous patterns, IgG anti-HEV was detected with a fusion antigen four weeks earlier and at higher levels than with the 55 kDa antigen.

None of the animals inoculated with dilutions of the standard HEV fecal suspension in the range of 10^{-6} - 10^{-8} developed antibody to any of the three HEV antigens. Increased ALT activities were not observed in those animals, except for one rather prominent peak of ALT activity at week 9 in cyno-400 (Table 5). However, the absence of seroconversion in this animal indicated that this peak probably was not related to HEV infection.

With respect to the two cynomolgus monkeys (387 and 392) inoculated orally with the 10^{-1} dilution of the 10% fecal suspension, neither monkey was infected since ALT levels did not rise and ELISA performed with the 3-2(M) and 55 kDa antigens did not detect seroconversion to HEV (Table 5).

Finally, serological evidence for HEV infection was found in all animals inoculated with decimal dilutions of the fecal suspension through 10^{-5} ; none of the animals receiving higher dilutions had such evidence. Prominent hepatitis, as defined by elevated ALT, was observed only in the two monkeys infected with the 10^{-1} dilution. Significantly lower elevations of ALT activities were observed in some animals inoculated with higher dilutions of the fecal suspension while, in others, elevations were not found. Considered alone, these low ALT rises were not diagnostic of hepatitis. However, the coincidence of seroconversion and appearance of these ALT peaks suggests the presence of mild hepatitis in these animals. Anti-HEV IgG seroconversion was detected in all animals inoculated with dilutions of fecal suspension ranging from 10^{-1} - 10^{-5} .

- ° A tendency toward lower levels of IgG anti-HEV and delayed seroconversion was observed in animals inoculated with higher dilutions of the stock.

In sum, the 55 kDa Pakistani ORF-2 antigen was more efficient than either the 3-2(M) or SG3 (B) antigen for
5 detecting IgM and IgG anti-HEV in cynomolgus monkeys infected with the Pakistani strain of HEV. For example, for all animal sera except those from cyno-385, detection of IgG or IgM anti-HEV by ELISA was more efficient with the 55 kDa antigen than with either the 3-2(M) or SG3 antigen. ELISA
10 with the 55 kDa antigen produced internally consistent and reproducible results, detecting IgG anti-HEV in all ten animals inoculated with a fecal dilution of 10^{-5} or lower. The magnitude of ELISA signals also decreased as the inoculum was diluted. The fusion antigens did not produce
15 consistent results between the pairs of animals. Only one of each pair of animals inoculated with the 10^{-1} , 10^{-2} , 10^{-3} , or 10^{-5} dilution showed seroconversion to IgG anti-HEV, and only a single seroconversion for IgM anti-HEV was detected with these antigens. Neither of the animals inoculated with
20 the 10^{-4} dilution of the original inoculum seroconverted to either of the two fusion antigens even though sera from one animal (cyno-393) had sustained high levels of anti-HEV IgG when assayed with the 55 kDa antigen. Although, as discussed above, ELISA for IgM anti-HEV was significantly
25 less sensitive than ELISA for cynomolgus IgG anti-HEV, the 55 kDa antigen was able to detect anti-HEV IgM in more animals than the 3-2(M) or SG3 (B) antigen. In sum, a definitive conclusion about the infectious titer of the Pakistani viral inoculum used in this study could not be
30 made with the combined data from the 3-2(M) and SG3 (B) based ELISA but could be made with data obtained with the 55 kDa Pakistani ELISA alone.

With respect to cyno-385, the difference in anti-HEV IgG detection between the two test results was four
35 weeks. These data suggest the presence of a distinct

° epitope in the 3-2(M) antigen recognized by this animal that is absent in the larger 55 kDa and SG3 (B) antigens. When total insect cell lysate, which contained both complete ORF-2 (75 kDa) and 55 kDa proteins, was used as antigen to retest these samples, the results were the same as when 55 kDa was used alone. This finding suggests that the 55 kDa protein may not lack 3-2 epitope amino acids but rather that the conformation of the 3-2 epitope sequence differed among all three antigens used in this study. Finally, it is interesting to note that despite the fact that antigen SG3 (B) contained a longer portion of ORF-2 and included the entire sequence of epitope 3-2, it did not detect more positive sera than the 3-2(M) antigen.

EXAMPLE 11

Determination of the Infectious Titer of the HEV SAR-55 Viral Stock BY RT-PCR

Knowledge of the infectious titer of inocula is critical for interpretation of much of the data obtained in experimental infections of animal models. However, until now the infectious titer of an HEV viral stock has not been reported. Ten-fold dilutions of the fecal suspension containing the SAR-55 strain of HEV were extracted and RT-PCR amplification was performed as follows to determine the highest dilution in which HEV genomes could be detected. 200 ul of fecal suspension was mixed with 0.4 ml of 1.5M NaCl plus 15% polyethylene glycol (PEG) 8000 and kept overnight at 4°C. Pellets were collected by centrifugation for 3 minutes in a microcentrifuge (Beckman, Palo Alto, CA) at 16,000g and dissolved in 475 ul of solution containing 4.2M guanidine thiocyanate, 0.5% N-lauroylsarcosine, 0.25M TRIS-HCl (pH 8.0). 0.15 M dithiothreitol (DTT), and 1.0µg of tRNA. Fifty microliters of 1M TRIS-HCl (pH 8.0), 100 mM EDTA, and 10% SDS was then added. The RNA was extracted twice with phenol-chloroform (1:1) at 65°C, followed by chloroform extraction at room temperature. To the upper phase, 250 µL of 7.5 M ammonium acetate was added, and

° nucleic acids were precipitated with 0.6mL of 2-propanol, washed with 75% ethanol, washed with 100% ethanol, and used for reverse transcription (RT) PCR.

For detection of the HEV genome, two sets of nested primers were used that represented sequences from the 3' region (ORF-2) of the SAR-55 genome. Primers for reverse transcription and the first PCR are shown as SEQ ID NO:99: GTATAACGGATCCACATCTCCCCTTACCTC and SEQ ID NO:100: TACAGATCTATACAACTTAACAGTCGG respectively. Primers for the second PCR are shown as SEQ ID NO: 101: GCGGCAGATCTCACCGACACCATAGTAC and SEQ ID NO:102: TAACCTGGATCCTTATGCCGCCCTCTTAG respectively. The RNA pellet was dissolved in 20 μ L of 0.05 M TRIS-HCl (pH 7.6), 0.06 M KCl, 0.01 M MgCl₂, 0.001 M DTT, 40 units of RNasin (Promega Biotec, Madison, WI), 16 units of avian myeloblastosis virus reverse transcriptase (Promega Biotec), and 10 pmol of reverse primer and incubated 1 hour at 42°C. To 20 μ L of reverse transcriptase mixture was added 100 μ L of 0.01 M TRIS-HCl (pH 8.4), 0.05 M KCl, 0.0025 M MgCl₂, 0.0002 M each dNTP, 50 pmol of direct primer, 50 pmol of reverse primer, and 4 units of AmpliTaq (Perkin-Elmer Cetus, Norwalk, CT) under 100 μ L of light mineral oil. The HEV cDNA was amplified by 35 cycles of PCR: 1 min at 94°C, 1 min at 55°C, 1 min at 72°C. The products of PCR were analyzed on 1% agarose gels. Then 5 μ L of this mixture was used for the second round of amplification under the same conditions, except the extension time was increased to 3 min.

The RT-PCR products produced in all dilutions of the standard HEV feces in the range from 10⁻¹ to 10⁻⁵ (Figure 9) were separated on a 2% agarose gel and were detected by ethidium bromide staining of the gel. A decrease in the amount of the specific PCR product at higher dilutions was observed and the highest dilution of the 10% fecal suspension in which the HEV genome was detected was 10⁻⁵. Therefore, taking into account the dilution factor, the HEV genome titer was approximately 10^{6.7} per gram of feces.

° In addition, only those dilutions that were shown by RT-PCR to contain the HEV genome were infectious for cynomolgus monkeys. Therefore, the infectivity titer of the standard fecal suspension and its genome titer as detected by RT-PCR were approximately the same. A similar correlation between RT-PCR and infectivity titer was found for one strain of hepatitis C virus [Cristiano et al., (1991) Hepatology, 14:51-55; Farci et al., (1991) N. Engl. J. Med., 25:98-104; Bukh et al., (1992); Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci U.S.A., 89:187-191)

EXAMPLE 12

Active Immunization Using The ORF-2 Protein As A Vaccine And Passive Immunization With Anti-HEV Positive Convalescent Plasma

Cynomolgus monkeys (*Macaca fascicularis*) that were HEV antibody negative (<1:10) in an ELISA based on the 55 kDa ORF-2 protein were individually housed under BL-2 biohazard containment and a suspension (in fetal bovine serum) of feces containing the Pakistani HEV strain SAR-55, diluted to contain 10,000 or 1,000 CID_{50} , was used for intravenous inoculation of animals.

For active immunization studies, baculovirus recombinant-expressed 55 kDa ORF-2 protein was purified from 5×10^8 SF-9 cells harvested 7 days post-inoculation as described in Example 10. Three mg of the purified 55 kDa protein were precipitated with alum and eight cynomolgus monkeys were immunized by intramuscular injection with 0.5 ml of vaccine containing 50 μ g of the alum-precipitated 55 kDa protein. Four monkeys received a single dose and four monkeys received two doses separated by four weeks. Primates were challenged intravenously with 1,000 - 10,000 CID_{50} of HEV four weeks after the last immunization.

Four cynomolgus monkeys served as controls in the active immunization studies. Cyno-412 and 413 received one dose of placebo (0.5 ml of phosphate buffered saline) and

° cyno-397 and 849 received two doses of placebo. The control animals were challenged with 1,000 - 10,000 CID_{50} of HEV.

For passive immunity studies, cyno-384 was infected with 0.5 ml of a 10% pooled stool suspension containing two Chinese HEV isolates, KS1-1987 and KS2-1987 and plasma was repeatedly collected from the animal during convalescence. (Yin et al. (1993) J. Med. Virol., 41:230-241;). Approximately 1% of the blood of cyno-396 and cyno-399 and 10% of the blood of cyno-401 and cyno-402 was replaced with convalescent plasma from cyno-384 having an HEV antibody titer of 1:10,000. Animals were challenged with 1000 CID_{50} of HEV two days after infusion of the plasma. As a control, 10% of the blood of cyno-405 was replaced with anti-HEV negative plasma obtained from cyno-384 prior to infection with HEV. Cyno-405 was then challenged with 1000 CID_{50} of HEV.

For both the passive and active immunization studies, percutaneous needle biopsies of the liver and samples of serum and feces were collected prior to inoculation and weekly for 15 weeks after inoculation. Sera were assayed for levels of alanine amino transferase (ALT) with commercially available tests (Metpath Inc., Rockville, MD) and biochemical evidence of hepatitis was defined as a two-fold or greater increase in ALT. Liver biopsies were examined under code and the anti-HEV ELISA utilized was described in Example 10. RNA extraction and RT-PCR were performed as in Example 11 except that RNA from 100 μ l of serum or from 100 μ l of 10% fecal suspension was extracted with TRIzol Reagent (Gibco BRL, Gaithersburg, Maryland) according to the manufacturer's protocol. For quantification, PCR positive serial sera or feces from each animal were combined and serially diluted in ten-fold increments in calf serum. One hundred μ l of each dilution were used for RNA extraction and RT-PCR as described earlier in this Example. The PCR protocol used in this study could

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- ° detect as few as 10 CID_{50} of HEV per ml of serum and as few as 100 CID_{50} per gram of feces.

Peak ALT values of weekly serum samples for 5 weeks prior to inoculation and for 15 weeks post-inoculation were expressed as ratios (post/pre) for each animal. The
5 geometric mean of the ratios from the control group of animals was compared with that from the passively or actively immunized animals using the Simes test (Simes, R.J. (1986) Biometrika, 73:751-754).

The durations of viremia and virus shedding in
10 feces and the HEV genome titers in the control group of animals were compared with those in passively or actively immunized animals using the Wilcoxon test [Noether, G. (1967) in *Elements of nonparametric statistics* (John Wiley & Sons Inc., New York), pp. 31-36.]. The same test was used
15 to compare the above parameters between passively and actively immunized animals.

For statistical analysis, serum samples that had <10 HEV genomes in 1 ml of serum were assigned a titer of 1:1 and fecal samples that had <100 HEV genomes in 1 g of
20 feces were assigned a titer of 1:10.

RESULTS

Course of hepatitis E infection in nonimmunized animals.

In 3 of 5 nonimmunized animals that were challenged
25 with HEV, biochemical evidence of hepatitis was documented by at least a two-fold increase in serum ALT values. In two animals, significant increases in ALT activity were not found. However, histopathological data documented hepatitis in all 5 animals as shown in Table 6.

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Table 6. Histopathological, biochemical, serological, and virological profiles of vaccinated and control animals challenged with HEV.

Animal # and category	Anti-HEV positive plasma (%) or 55 kDA protein (μg)	Cumulative score of histopa- thology (number of weeks de- tected)*.	Peak ALT value in U/L (week)		HEV antibody titer at the time of challenge	HEV genome			
			pre- inoculation	post- inoculation		serum		feces	
						week de- tected (duration)	mean log ₁₀ titer per ml	week de- tected (duration)	mean log ₁₀ titer per gram
control									
405	0	10+ (8)	67 (0)	143 (9)	<1:10	1-11 (11)	3	1-11 (11)	5.7
412	0	2+ (1)	34 (0)	45 (3)	<1:10	1-4 (4)	3	2-5 (4)	7
413	0	4+ (4)	44 (0)	261 (6)	<1:10	2-7 (6)	4.7	1-7 (7)	7
849	0	1+ (1)	79 (-2)	133 (2)	<1:10	1-4 (4)	3.7	1-4 (4)	7
397	0	3+ (3)	52 (-3)	139 (7)	<1:10	2-6 (5)	4.7	1-7 (7)	7
passive IP [†]									
396	1%	1+ (1) [†]	33 (0)	53 (6)	1:40	3-5 (3)	4	1-6 (6)	5.7
399	1%	0 (0)	69 (0)	63 (11)	1:40	2-4 (3)	3	1-4 (4)	4

	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	0		
	401	10%	0 (0)	55 (0)	45 (5)	1:200	3 (1)	3.6	1-3 (3)	5.7
	402	10%	0 (0)	59 (0)	35 (2)	1:200	4-6 (3)	1	2-6 (5)	5.7
										20
	active IP†									
	003	50 µg	0 (0)	34 (-3)	50 (6)	1:10,000	0	<1	2-4 (3)	3
	009	50 µg	0 (0)	34 (-2)	38 (6)	1:1,000	0	<1	0	<2
	013§	50 µg	0 (0)	44 (-3)	36 (7)	1:100	0	<1	1-2 (2)	3
	414	50 µg	0 (0)	65 (0)	73 (8)	1:1,000	0	<1	2 (1)	2
	398	2×50 µg	0 (0)	31 (0)	41 (2)	1:10,000	0	<1	0	<2
	407	2×50 µg	0 (0)	150 (0)	213 (4)	1:10,000	0	<1	0	<2

*Necro-inflammatory changes in the liver were rated as 1+, 2+, 3+, 4+ and the weekly scores were summed.

[†]Immunoprophylaxis

[‡]Necro-inflammatory changes rated 1+ were detected during two weeks in cyno-396, however, they were consistent with viral hepatitis only during one week.

[§]Cyno 013 died 9 weeks after challenge.

° Necro-inflammatory changes ranged between 1+ and 2+ on a scale of 1+ to 4+ and were temporally associated with elevations of ALT activities in those animals with such elevations.

5 All control animals seroconverted to HEV 3-5 weeks post-challenge and developed maximum HEV antibody titers ranging from 1:1,000 to 1:32,000. There was a good correlation between the severity of infection, hepatitis, and the level of anti-HEV response. Cyno-405, which had the highest cumulative score for hepatitis, also had the longest
10 period of viremia and viral excretion and the highest level of anti-HEV (Table 6). The duration of viral shedding in feces was the same as, or longer than, that of the viremia. For all of the control animals, titers of the HEV genome in serum were lower (10^{-3} - $10^{-4.7}$) than the titers in feces ($10^{-5.7}$ - 10^{-7}).
15 In all five of these animals, viremia and virus shedding in feces were detected for 4-11 weeks and for an average of 4.2 weeks after seroconversion (range 2-9 weeks).

20 Passive immunization. Cyno-396 and 399, which had approximately 1% of their blood replaced with anti-HEV positive convalescent plasma, had an HEV antibody titer of 1:40 when it was determined two days post-transfusion (at the time of challenge) (Table 6). A two-fold fall in HEV antibody titer was observed in both animals 1 week post-transfusion and HEV antibodies fell below the detectable
25 level (<1:10) by 2 weeks post-transfusion. Anti-HEV was again detected 5 weeks post-challenge in cyno-396 and 4 weeks post-challenge in cyno-399, indicating that infection with HEV had occurred. The maximum HEV antibody titer
30 (1:8,000) was reached 9-10 weeks post-challenge. Neither cynomolgus monkey demonstrated a significant elevation of ALT activity after challenge. However, histologic evidence of hepatitis was detected in cyno-396 and the HEV genome was detected in serum and feces from both animals (Table 6).

° Cyno-401 and 402 had approximately 10% of their blood replaced with convalescent plasma. Two days post-transfusion, at the time of challenge, the HEV antibody titer in both cynomolgus monkeys was 1:200 (Table 7).

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Table 7. HEV antibody profiles in control and immunized cynomolgus monkeys.

Control animals	HEV antibody		Passively immunized animals	HEV antibody		Actively immunized animals	HEV antibody		
	titer (week first detected)	max. titer (week)		titer at the time of challenge	max. titer (week after challenge)		max. titer (week after 1st immunization)	max. titer (week after 2nd immunization)	max. titer (week after challenge)
cyno-405	1:80 (3)	1:32,000 (9)	cyno-396	1:40	1:8,000 (10)	cyno-003	1:10,000 (3)	1:10,000 (5)	1:10,000 (5)
cyno-412	1:100 (5)	1:10,000 (7)	cyno-399	1:40	1:8,000 (9)	cyno-009	1:10,000 (3)	1:10,000 (1)	1:10,000 (1)
cyno-413	1:100 (5)	1:10,000 (7)	cyno-401	1:200	1:4,000 (6)	cyno-013	1:100 (2)	1:10,000 (3)	1:10,000 (3)
cyno-849	1:100 (3)	1:1,000 (5)	cyno-402	1:200	1:80 (12)	cyno-414	1:1,000 (3)	1:1,000 (0)	1:1,000 (0)
cyno-397	1:100 (3)	1:10,000 (7)				cyno-398	1:1,000 (3)	1:10,000 (5)	1:10,000 (0)
						cyno-407	1:1,000 (4)	1:10,000 (5)	1:10,000 (0)

° Anti-HEV was detected continuously in both animals during the 15 weeks after challenge and reached a maximum titer of 1:4,000 in cyno-401 but only 1:80 in cyno-402. Biochemical and histologic analyses did not reveal hepatitis in either animal. However, in both animals, HEV viremia and fecal shedding of virus were observed indicating that infection had occurred (Table 6). Thus, passive immunoprophylaxis that achieved a higher titer of antibody protected cynomolgus monkeys against hepatitis after challenge with HEV.

10 Active immunization. Four primates immunized with one 50 µg dose of the 55 kDa protein developed antibody to the recombinant protein ranging in titer from 1:100 to 1:10,000 (Table 7). One (cyno 013) died of an anesthesia accident 9 weeks after challenge and is included in the analyses (Table 6). The four animals that received two doses of the antigen developed HEV antibodies with titers of 1:10,000. Two of the four monkeys died following intravenous challenge with HEV. This may have also been the result of an anesthesia accident but the exact etiology could not be determined. These two monkeys were deleted from further analyses. None of the 6 remaining animals developed abnormal ALT levels or histologic evidence of hepatitis following challenge (Table 6). Cynomolgus monkeys immunized with either 1 or 2 doses of the 55 kDa protein did not develop viremia. However, 3 of 4 animals that received one dose of the immunogen excreted virus in their feces. In contrast, virus shedding was not observed in either of the two challenged animals that had received two doses of the vaccine.

30 Most of the actively immunized animals developed higher HEV antibody titers than did passively immunized animals. However, cyno-013 had an HEV antibody titer of 1:100 at the time of challenge, compared with a titer of 1:200 in two animals immunized passively with anti-HEV plasma. Cyno-013, however, demonstrated greater protection

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° against HEV infection than the passively immunized animals. Cyno-009, which had an HEV antibody titer of 1:1,000 at the time of challenge, was completely protected against hepatitis and HEV infection (Table 6). In contrast, cyno-003 was infected and shed HEV in feces, even though it had an HEV antibody titer of 1:10,000 at the time of challenge. However, neither hepatitis nor viremia was detected in this animal or in other cynomolgus monkeys that received one dose of immunogen and had HEV antibody titers of 1:10,000 or greater.

10 Comparison of course of HEV infection in control and immunized animals.

As measured by histopathology, all immunized animals, with the exception of one of the passively immunized monkeys, were protected against hepatitis after intravenous challenge with HEV. Comparison of mean values for severity of hepatitis and level of viral replication between the control group and the passively and actively immunized animals indicated that, in general, the severity of infection was inversely related to the HEV antibody titer at the time of challenge and diminished in the order: unimmunized>passive immunization (1%)>passive immunization (10%)>active immunization (1 dose)>active immunization (2 doses) (Tables 6,8). However, the number of animals in each of the two subgroups of passively and actively immunized animals was not sufficient to permit statistical analysis. Therefore, statistical analysis was performed for combined passively immunized and combined actively immunized groups respectively in comparison with the combined control groups. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 8.

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Category (number) of animals	Histopathology		GM ⁺ of peak A.T.T		HEV antibody		11H.V genome	
	Mean of cumulative score	Weeks	Pre-in- tro- cula- tion	Post- tro- cula- tion	Ratio	1/L	titers at the time of challenge	antibody
Control (5)	4+		53	125	2.4		<1:10	
Passive 1% (2) [†]	0.5+		48	58	1.2		1:40	
Passive 10% (2) [†]	0		57	40	0.7		1:200	
Active 1 dose (4) [†]	0		43	47	1.1		1:3,025	
Active 2 doses (4) [†]	0		68	93	1.4		1:10,000	

†Passive and active immunophylaxis

 $\beta - P < 0.05$

γ - not significant

° and they show that the histopathology scores and duration of histologic changes in the control group were statistically different from those of passively or actively immunized animals. The higher post-/pre-inoculation ratios of peak ALT values in the control group were statistically significant when compared with those of the passively or actively immunized animals, indicating protection against biochemical manifestations of hepatitis in both groups of immunized animals. The duration of viremia and the titer of HEV in the feces were significantly lower in both groups of immunized animals than in the control group. Differences in the duration of virus shedding and titer of HEV in the serum, however, were not statistically different between the control group and the passively immunized group, although these parameters were significantly different when the control group was compared with the actively immunized group. Significant differences were also found between passively and actively immunized groups of animals for duration of viremia and fecal shedding as well as for HEV titers.

20 In sum, the results presented in Tables 6-8 show that both passively and actively acquired HEV antibodies protected cynomolgus monkeys against hepatitis following challenge with virulent HEV. Although all 5 nonimmunized cynomolgus monkeys developed histologic evidence of hepatitis when challenged with 1,000 - 10,000 CID₅₀ of SAR-55, both animals with passively acquired antibody titers of 1:200 were protected from hepatitis and one of two animals with an antibody titer as low as 1:40 also did not develop hepatitis.

30 However, it should be noted that actively immunized animals demonstrated complete protection against hepatitis and more effective resistance to HEV infection than did passively immunized animals. For example, in contrast to results obtained from the passively immunized animals, viremia was not detected in actively immunized

° animals after challenge with HEV. An HEV antibody titer as high as 1:10,000 could be achieved in cynomolgus monkeys after one or two immunizations with the recombinant 55 kDa protein. Although one monkey (013) developed a titer of 1:100 after active immunization, this level still prevented hepatitis and viremia.

The active immunization studies also demonstrated that while a single dose of vaccine prevented HEV viremia, viral shedding in feces was still detected. However, two doses of vaccine were observed to prevent all signs of hepatitis and HEV infection. These results thus suggest that a single dose of vaccine administered, for example, to individuals before foreign travel would protect them from hepatitis E in high risk environments.

Finally, it is noted that the results presented are very similar to results reported previously for passive and active immunoprophylaxis of nonhuman primates against hepatitis A: passive immunoprophylaxis prevented hepatitis but not infection whereas vaccination prevented not only hepatitis but infection with HAV as well (Purcell, R.H. et al. (1992) Vaccine, 10:5148-5149). It is of interest that the study of immunoprophylaxis for HEV presented herein parallels the previous study of immunoprophylaxis against HAV, both in determination of the titer of antibody that protected (<1:100) and in outcome following intravenous challenge with virulent virus. Since other studies have demonstrated efficacy of comparable titers of passively and actively acquired anti-HAV in humans and have confirmed the predictive value of studies of primates in hepatitis research (Stapleton, J., et al. (1985) Gastroenterology 89:637-642; Innis, B.L., et al. (1992) Vaccine, 10: S159), it is therefore highly likely that these results in cynomolgus monkeys will be predictive of protection in humans.

EXAMPLE 13

Direct Expression In Yeast Of Complete ORF-2 Protein
And Lower Molecular Weight Fragments

Four cDNA ORF-2 fragments coding for:

1. complete ORF-2 protein (aa 1-660, MW 70979),
fragment 1778-1703. (where the fragment
numbers refer to the primer numbers given
below)
2. ORF-2 protein starting from 34th aa (aa 34-
660, MW 67206), fragment 1779-1703.
3. ORF-2 protein starting from 96th aa (aa 96-
660, MW 60782), fragment 1780-1703.
4. ORF-2 protein starting from 124th aa (aa
124-660, MW 58050), fragment 1781-1703.

were obtained using PCR by using plasmid P63-2 as template
and the synthetic oligonucleotides shown below:

SEQ ID NO.:103 (reverse primer #1703)
GCACAACCTAGGTTACTATAACTCCCGAGTTTTACC, SEQ ID NO.:104 (direct
primer #1778) GGGTTCCTAGGATGCGCCCTCGGCCTATTTTG, SEQ ID
NO.:105 (direct primer #1779)
CGTGGGCCTAGGAGCGGCGGTTCCGGCGGTGGT, SEQ ID NO.:106 (direct
primer #1780) GCTTGGCCTAGGCAGGCCCGCCCGCCGCT and SEQ ID
NO.:107 (direct primer #1781)
CCGCCACCTAGGGATGTTGACTCCCGCGGCGCC.

All sequences shown in SEQ ID NOs: 103-107 contain
artificial sequence CCTAGG at their 5' ends preceded by 4
nucleotides. The artificial sequence was a recognition site
for Avr II (Bln I) restriction enzyme. Synthesized PCR
fragments were cleaved with BlnI and cloned in the AvrII
site of pPIC9 vector (Figure 10) (Invitrogen). Correct
orientation of the fragments was confirmed by restriction
analysis, using asymmetric EcoRI site present in ORF-2
sequences and in the vector. Purified recombinant plasmids
pPIC9-1778 (containing fragment 1778-1703); pPIC9-1779
(containing fragment 1779-1703); pPIC9-1780 (containing
fragment 1780-1703) and pPIC9-1781 (containing fragment

1781-1730) were used for transformation of yeast spheroplast (Picha strain) according to *Invitrogen* protocol. Screening of recombinant clones and analysis of expression were performed using the same protocol. These expressed proteins may be used as immunogens in vaccines and as antigens in immunoassays as described in the present application. Finally, those of skill in the art would recognize that the vector and strain of yeast used in the above example could be replaced by other vectors (e.g. pHIL-F1; *Invitrogen*) or strains of yeast (e.g. *Saccharomyces Cerevisiae*).

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EXAMPLE 14

Purification and Amino Terminal Sequence Analysis of
HEV ORF-2 Gene Products Synthesized in SF-9 Insect Cells
Infected With Recombinant Baculovirus 63-2-IV-2

As described in Example 10, SF-9 cells were infected with recombinant baculovirus 63-2-IV-2 and harvested seven days post-inoculation. The predominant protein band present on SDS-PAGE of the insect cell lysate was approximately 55 kDa in molecular weight. Further purification of this 55 kDa band was accomplished by ion-exchange column chromatography using DEAE-sepharose with a 150-450 mM NaCl gradient. DEAE fractions were assayed for the presence of the 55 kDa band by SDS-PAGE followed by Coomassie blue staining. The peak fraction was then resolved by polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis in the absence of SDS into three bands of 55 kDa, 61 kDa and a band of intermediate molecular weight. Analysis of each protein band from the polyacrylamide gel by amino-terminal microprotein sequencing revealed that the 55 and 61 kDa proteins shared a unique N-terminus at Ala-112 of SEQ ID NO:2. It is believed that the size differences in the two ORF-2 cleavage products may reflect either different COOH-terminal cleavage of the larger product.

The third intermediate protein on the polyacrylamide gel was shown to be a baculovirus chitinase protein. The 55 and 61 kDa ORF-2 proteins were resolved

- ° into a single symmetrical peak fraction devoid of any chitinase by subjecting peak DEAE fractions to reverse phase HPLC using a micropore system with NaCl and acetonitrile solvents.

EXAMPLE 15

5 Direct Expression of 55 and 61 kDa Cleavage Products

- A cDNA ORF-2 fragment coding for ORF-2 protein starting from the 112th amino acid (amino acids 112-660 of ORF-2) was obtained by PCR using plasmid p63-2 as the template. The cDNA fragment was then inserted into a
10 pBlueBac-3Transfer vector at the BamHI-PstI site in the vector. SF9 insect cells are infected with the recombinant baculovirus generated from this vector and insect cell lysates are analyzed for the presence of the 55 and 61 kDa ORF-2 proteins by Coomassie blue staining of polyacrylamide
15 gels. The directly expressed protein(s) may be used as immunogens in vaccines and as antigens in immunoassays as described herein.

Example 16

20 Kinetics of HEV ORF2 protein expression in insect cells

- The expression kinetics and purification of full-length and truncated versions of the HEV ORF2 (Pakistan strain) in baculovirus-infected insect cells were examined. The 72 and 63 kD ORF2 proteins described in this Example are
25 the same proteins as the 74 and 61 kD proteins previously described herein in Examples 3 and 14 respectively; the difference in molecular weights falling within the small range of normal variability observed for determination of molecular weights via mobility in gel electrophoresis.

- 30 Cell culture. *Spodoptera frugiperda* cells, clone 9 (Sf-9), were cultivated as monolayer cultures for plaque assays and transfections and shaker suspension cultures for virus infections to produce high-titered virus stocks and recombinant protein. Sf-9 cells were maintained at 28°C and
35 150 rpm in Sf-900 II serum-free medium (SFM) (Life

Technologies, Inc., Gaithersburg, MD) in dry-air incubators and were subcultured from a starting density of 0.2×10^6 cells/ml to a final density of 1.0×10^7 cells/ml as suspension cultures up to passage 70.

Virus infections. Recombinant *Autographa californica* multinuclear polyhedrosis baculoviruses (AcMNPV) were passaged in Sf-9 cells (2.0×10^6 cells/ml) at low multiplicity of infection (MOI; 0.01). Virus infections for the purpose of recombinant protein production were initiated at an MOI = 5 and maintained for four days until viability reached < 10%. Plaque agarose assays were performed in six-well plates with Sf-9 cell monolayers at 75% confluency by standard methods.

Construction of recombinant baculoviruses. Recombinant baculoviruses (Fig. 11) containing full-length (bHEV ORF2 fl) and a 5'-truncated deletion (bHEV ORF2 5' tr) of HEV ORF2 (Pakistan strain) were constructed by standard homologous recombination in Sf-9 insect cells. A recombinant baculovirus containing a 5'- 3' truncation deletion of HEV ORF2 was constructed using bacmid vectors (Luckow, V.A., et al. (1993) *J. Virol.* 67: 4566-4579) as follows:

Oligonucleotide primers HEV-140 (5' - TTCGGATCCATGGCGGTCTCGCTCCGGCC-3') (SEQ ID NO: 108) and HEV-141 (5' -TCAAGCTTATCATCATAGCACAGAGTGGGGGGC-3') (SEQ ID NO: 109) were used to clone a 1512 bp PCR-generated DNA fragment encoding HEV ORF2 amino acids 112 through 607 with its own ATG translation initiation codon and multiple stop codons from p61.2 into pCR2.1 (InVitrogen, San Diego, CA) by T/A PCR cloning. A 1520 bp *Bam*HI - *Eco*RI DNA fragment containing HEV ORF2 DNA sequences was inserted downstream of the *polh* promoter within the *polh* locus in the baculovirus donor plasmid, pFASTBAC-1 (Life Technologies, Inc.) Recombinant baculoviruses containing the HEV ORF2 DNA were isolated from Sf-9 cells transfected with the recombinant bacmid DNA using the cationic lipid CELLFECTIN (Life Technologies, Inc.).

° Plaque-purified virus isolates were screened for HEV ORF2 DNA insert integrity and protein expression in insect cells and expanded into a master virus seed bank designated bHEV ORF2 5'-3' tr virus.

Infected cell and supernatant processing, Infected cells and
5 supernatant media were harvested at indicated times by centrifugation at 500 x g and 4°C for 5 min. and processed for recombinant HEV ORF2 proteins. Cell lysates were prepared by resuspension of cell pellets in lysis buffer (0.5% NP-40, 50 mM Tris-HCl, pH 8.0, 2 mM EDTA) at 2 ml per
10 mg cell pellet and supplemented with fresh aprotinin to a final concentration of 0.2 mg/ml, vortexed briefly, and incubated for 20 min. on ice. Nuclei were pelleted by low speed centrifugation at 3000 x g and 4°C for 15 min., and the cytoplasmic fraction was collected and used as crude
15 cell lysate. The infected cell supernatants and cell lysates were clarified by centrifugation at 12,000 x g and 4°C for 60 min. using the Sorvall SS34 rotor.

Purification of HEV ORF2 protein products. Recombinant HEV ORF2 proteins were purified from clarified baculovirus-
20 infected cell lysates and supernatant media separately. The crude cell lysate was diluted 1:10 with loading buffer (50 mM Tris-HCl, pH 8.0, 10 mM NaCl).

Clarified infected cell supernatants were concentrated ten-fold by tangential flow ultrafiltration
25 using a spiral wound cellulosic ultrafiltration cartridge (S1Y10; 1 sq. ft. area; 10,000 MW cutoff; Amicon, Beverly, MA) on an Amicon Proflux M-12 ultrafiltration system at a recirculation rate of 4L/min. and a transmembrane pressure of 20 psi. The concentrated supernatant was diafiltered
30 against 4 volumes of loading buffer.

The diafiltrate or diluted crude lysate (1.5 bed vol.) was loaded onto a Q Sepharose Fast Flow strong anion exchange column (XK50 column, 5.0 x 7.5 cm, 150 ml; Pharmacia, Piscataway, NJ) at a flow rate of 5.0 ml/min. The
35 column was washed first with 1.0 bed volume of loading

° buffer at a flow rate of 5 ml/min. followed by a second wash with 1.0 bed volume of loading buffer at a flow rate of 20 ml/min. The proteins were eluted with 6.5 bed volumes of a continuous linear gradient of NaCl from 10 to 300 mM in the same buffer at a flow rate of 20 ml/min.

5 Ten μ l aliquots from Q Sepharose column (Pharmacia, Piscataway, NJ) peak protein fractions were subjected to SDS-PAGE analysis to identify HEV ORF2 (+) protein fractions. Pooled (+) fractions were desalted by gel filtration using Sepharose G-25 (Pharmacia) and loading
10 buffer. The peak protein fraction was collected and loaded onto a Source 15 Q High Performance (Pharmacia) strong anion exchange column to resolve HEV ORF2 polypeptides. The column was washed and eluted as described above for Q Sepharose liquid chromatography. Pooled HEV ORF2 protein (+)
15 fractions were identified as above, pooled, and subjected to a final gel filtration on a Sephacryl S-200 column (Pharmacia) using loading buffer for final protein purification. HEV ORF2 protein fractions were identified by SDS-PAGE and Western blot analyses as described below.

20 Protein concentrations were determined by the BCA/Pierce microprotein assay at 60°C using bovine serum albumin as a protein standard. All chromatography was performed using a Waters 600E chromatography workstation system (Medford, MA) equipped with Millennium 2010 software
25 for process control and monitoring. Buffer conductivities were determined using an AccuMet 20 conductivity meter. A Corning 220 pH meter was used for determinations of buffer pH.. All buffer components were USP or molecular biology grade raw materials.

30 SDS-PAGE, and Western blot analyses. Proteins were diluted two-fold in protein denaturation sample buffer (126 mM Tris-HCl, pH 6.8, 5% β -mercaptoethanol, 20% glycerol, 2% SDS, and 0.005% bromophenol blue) and denatured at 99°C for 5 min. Denatured samples were electrophoresed on 8-16% gradient
35 SDS-polyacrylamide gels (NOVEX) (Laemmli, U.K. et al. (1970)

° Nature 227:680-685). Proteins were visualized by staining protein gels with colloidal Coomassie blue stain solution (NOVEX, San Diego, CA) as suggested by the manufacturer.

Proteins were transferred to PVDF membranes by electroblot techniques (Tsarev, S.A., et al. (1993) J. Inf. Dis. 168: 369-378). HEV ORF2 products were detected chromogenically by binding to primary antisera (chimpanzee polyclonal α -HEV; 1:500) followed by binding to secondary antisera (goat α -human IgG₂-conjugated to alkaline phosphatase (1:5000; Life Technologies, Inc.). NBT/BCIP (Life Technologies, Inc.) was used as the chromogenic substrate.

Amino terminal sequence analysis. Proteins were subjected to polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis in the presence of SDS using the buffer systems of Laemmli (Laemmli, U.K. et al. (1970) Nature 227:680-685). Proteins were transferred electrophoretically from the gel to a Pro Blot membrane (Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Proteins were visualized by Coomassie blue staining and the 63 kD and 55 kD HEV ORF2 proteins were excised for amino terminal sequence analysis using an Applied Biosystems Model 473 gas/pulsed-liquid phase protein sequencer with on-line PTH analyzer.

Internal amino acid sequence analysis. Proteins were subjected to electrophoresis as described above. Proteins were transferred onto nitrocellulose membranes and visualized with Ponceau S staining. The relevant bands were cut from the membrane and processed for *in situ* proteolytic digestion with Lys C (Boehringer Mannheim, Indianapolis, IN) according to the procedure of Abersold et al. (Abersold, R.H., et al. (1987) Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 84:6970-6974). The Lys C derived fragments were isolated using a Waters Associates (Medford, MA) high pressure liquid chromatography system and a Vydac C4 (Hesperia, CA) reversed phase column. The amino acid sequences of the isolated

peptides were determined using an Applied Biosystems model 477A protein sequencer and model 120A on-line PTH analyzer. Amino acid analysis. The amino acid compositions of the Lys C derived fragments described above were determined following vapor phase hydrolysis in 6N HCl at 150°C for 1 hour using a Waters Pico Tag work station. Amino acids were derivatized with phenylisothiocyanate (PTC) and the resulting PTC amino acids were separated and quantified using a Waters Pico Tag amino acid analysis system.

Carboxy-terminal sequence analysis. Immobilized carboxypeptidase Y (Pierce, Rockford, IL) was used for the sequential release of amino acids from the carboxy-terminus of the 55 kD HEV protein. Approximately 150 µg of the protein in 800 µl of 0.05 M sodium acetate buffer pH 5.5 was mixed with a 200 µl suspension of the resin at 37°C. Aliquots of the supernatant (100 µl) were taken at 0, 5, 15, 30, 60, 90 and 120 minutes. A final aliquot was collected at 16 hours. The samples were dried under vacuum and subjected to amino acid analysis as described above without the hydrolysis step.

Mass spectroscopy. Mass spectrometric detection of purified proteins was performed with a Perkin-Elmer Sciex API-III triple stage quadrupole mass spectrometer (Foster City, CA) equipped with an atmospheric pressure articulated ion spray source. High purity nitrogen served both as the nebulizer gas (operative pressure = 0.5 MPa) and curtain gas (flow rate = 0.8 l/min.). Argon was used as the target gas at a collision gas mass of 3×10^{15} atoms/cm². The mass spectra scanning range m/z 100-1500 positive ions were obtained by direct infusion of 50 µl/min with a Harvard Apparatus Model 11 syringe pump (Southnatick, MA) of bovine serum albumin standard solutions diluted 1:200 in the mobile phase. Spectra were collected at 1.0 sec intervals. Capillary voltage was maintained at 2 kV and 60°C.

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The temporal expression of HEV ORF2 gene products was investigated to identify processed recombinant HEV proteins. Sf-9 insect cells cultivated as suspension cultures in serum-free medium were infected with recombinant baculoviruses encoding full-length hepatitis E virus capsid gene (Pakistan strain) (Figure 11). Cell lysates and media supernatants were harvested from the virus infections daily for four consecutive days. Results of SDS-PAGE and Western blot analyses from HEV cell lysates demonstrated the presence of a HEV ORF2 72 kD protein at one day postinfection (p.i.) that disappeared thereafter (Figure 12). At two days p.i. 63 and 55 kD HEV proteins were present in infected cells. The 55 kD HEV protein became predominant in infected cells at three days p.i. (Figure 12). The abundant protein at 63-65 kD observed at two through four days postinfection was identified as the baculovirus chitinase and not the HEV 63 kD protein. A 53 kD HEV protein was secreted into infected cell media supernatants as soon as one day p.i. and was maximally abundant by three days p.i. These results indicated that a stochastic proteolytic cleavage of the primary 72 kD HEV protein occurred to generate a final 55 kD (cell lysate) or 53 kD (media) HEV protein product.

HEV protein purification. The recombinant HEV 63 and 55 kD proteins were purified by anion exchange chromatography and gel filtration from cell lysates produced by NP-40 lysis of Sf-9 cells infected with recombinant bHEV ORF2 *f1* virus or truncated viruses and harvested at 4 days p.i. The 53 kD secreted protein was purified from media supernatants of harvested virus infections which were clarified by centrifugation and concentrated 10 fold by tangential flow ultrafiltration. Cell lysates and concentrated media supernatants were diluted 10 fold and diafiltered, respectively, with Q loading buffer (50 mM Tris-HCl, pH 8.0, 10 mM NaCl) from cells infected with the 5' doubly truncated

construct. Equilibrated cell lysates (55 kD protein) and media supernatants (53 kD protein) were loaded separately onto a Q Sepharose Fast Flow strong anion exchange column. HEV 55 kD proteins were bound and eluted at an ionic strength of 140 mM NaCl (Figure 13A). HEV protein fractions from chromatographed cell lysates and supernatants were pooled, desalted by passage through a Sephacryl G-25 column, and subjected to a second round of anion exchange chromatography using a SOURCE 15 Q strong anion high performance column. HEV proteins were bound and then eluted at 140 mM NaCl (Figure 13B). HEV protein peak fractions were pooled and fractionated by gel filtration using a Sephacryl S 200 column (Figure 13C). SDS-PAGE and Western blot analyses of the 55 kD protein fractions demonstrated that the 55 kD protein was of HEV origin (Figure 14, lower panel). From Coomassie blue-stained protein gels, the purity of the 55 kD protein was estimated to be 99% or greater (Figure 14, upper panel).

Amino terminal sequence analysis. To determine the amino termini of the recombinant HEV 63 and 55 kD proteins detected during bHEV infection of insect cells, amino terminal amino acid sequence analysis was undertaken. Pooled HEV protein fractions were collected from Q Sepharose Fast Flow columns loaded with diluted cell lysates from Sf-9 insect cells infected with bHEV ORF2 fl virus and harvested at 2 days p.i. Two HEV proteins were purified from the peak Q fractions at 140 mM NaCl at a ratio of 1:20 (63 kD: 55 kD). Direct Edman degradation of the HEV 63 kD and 55 kD protein bands excised from the ProBlot membrane resulted in an identical amino acid sequence through 20 cycles (Table 9).

Table 9. Amino terminal amino acid sequence analysis of recombinant HEV 63 and 55 kD proteins purified from cell lysates.

	Amino acid analyzer cycle	HEV 55 kD	HEV 63 kD
	1	A	A
	2	A	A
	3	P	P
5	4	L	L
	5	T	T
	6	A	A
	7	V	V
	8	A	A
	9	P	P
	10	A	A
10	11	H	H
	12	D	D
	13	T	T
	14	P	P
	15	P	P
	16	V	V
	17	P	P
	18	D	D
15	19	V	V
	20	D	D

The sequence corresponded to residues 112 through 131 of open-reading frame 2 of the HEV genome. These results indicated that the difference in apparent molecular weight between the two immunoreactive proteins was due to carboxy-terminal truncations.

Internal amino acid sequence analysis. To determine further the shared identity of the recombinant HEV 63 and 55 kD proteins, peptidase-digestion and fractionation were performed. Purified 55 kD HEV protein was digested with Lys C protease as the specificity of this enzyme for cleavage carboxy-terminal to lysine residues was deemed more suitable than trypsin for peptide production and amino acid sequence determination from the 55 kD HEV protein. The peptide profile of the resulting Lys C digest is shown in Figure 15.

Aliquots of the peaks were subjected to amino acid sequence analysis. Amino acid sequences of internal peptides for the recombinant HEV ORF2 55 kD protein corresponded to the expected amino acid sequence of the HEV ORF2 (Pakistan strain). Peptides containing amino acid sequences from the

° HEV ORF2 amino acid region 607 through 670 were not found. Of particular interest was fraction 24 which yielded 52 cycles of clear sequence corresponding to amino acid residues 554 through 606 of HEV ORF 2. Increases in PTH leucine at cycles 53 or 55 (residues 606 or 608) were not
5 observed, although an increase in PTH alanine was observed in cycle 54. Since > 50 amino acid residues of readable amino acid sequence was not common in our laboratory, it was not clear whether the failure to obtain additional sequence data was caused by a loss of signal due to reaching the end
10 of the peptide (i.e., the carboxy-terminus of the protein) or a failure in Edman chemistry. Therefore, determination of the carboxy terminus of the recombinant HEV ORF2 55 kD protein by several other means was necessary.

Amino acid composition analysis: An alternative means to
15 determine whether amino acids 606 to 608 of the recombinant HEV ORF2 55 kD protein were present in Lys C digestion fraction 24 was amino acid composition analysis of this peptide. The results of amino acid analysis of an aliquot of fraction 24 is shown in Table 10.

20 Table 10. Summary of amino acid composition analysis of fraction 24 from Lys-C digested HEV 55 kD protein.

Amino Acid	Expected	Observed
Asn + Asp	4	4.4
Gln + Glu	2	3.2
Ser	6	5.7
Gly	4	6.3
His	2	2.1
Arg	1	2.0
Thr	5	5.0
Ala	10	10
Pro	3	3.3
Tyr	4	3.5
Val	6	6.1
Met	0	.7

Cys*	0	0*
Ile	2	2.7
Leu	6	6.3
Phe	0	.6
Lys	0	.9
Normalized to 10 Ala No derivatization of Cys was performed prior to hydrolysis		

This analysis indicated that the failure to obtain amino acid sequence data beyond cycle 54 (residue 607) was due to the fact that amino acid sequencing had reached the carboxy terminus of the 55 kD protein. The results were consistent with the peptide ending at leucine 607. Although this analysis accommodated other minor variations, it demonstrated clearly that the peptide terminated well past an earlier lysine residue (residue 600) in the HEV ORF 2.

Carboxy-terminal sequence analysis. A further means to determine the carboxy terminus of the recombinant HEV ORF2 55 kD protein was carboxy terminal amino acid analysis of carboxypeptidase-digested 55 kD protein. Amino acid analysis of the free amino acids released during a timed incubation with immobilized carboxypeptidase Y revealed a rapid increase in leucine followed by valine, serine, and histidine (Figure 16). No significant increases in the amounts of other amino acids were observed. These results corroborated assignment of the carboxy terminus of the recombinant HEV ORF2 55 kD protein at amino acid leucine 607.

Mass spectrometric analysis. The expected molecular weight of the HEV 55 kD protein (amino acids 112-607 of HEV ORF2) from the nucleotide sequence of HEV ORF2 (Pakistan strain) was estimated at 53 kD. To obtain an absolute mass of this protein, electrospray mass spectroscopy of the purified recombinant HEV 55 kD protein was undertaken. The result from several rounds of MS measurements was that a single

° polypeptide with a molecular mass of ~ 56,000 daltons was present in the purified protein preparation (Figure 17). Since mass spectroscopy has a 0.01% degree of accuracy, the conclusion that the HEV 55 kD protein was generated by both N- and C-terminal proteolytic cleavages was corroborated.

5 Kinetics of HEV ORF2 truncated protein expression in insect cells. To determine whether primary proteins that were deleted at the amino and/or carboxy termini of the HEV ORF2 could be expressed stably and at high levels in insect cells, 5' and 5'-3' truncated deletion mutants of the HEV

10 ORF2 were cloned in baculovirus vectors. The results from infections with bHEV ORF2 5' tr and bHEV ORF2 5'-3' tr viruses indicated that the 63 and 55 kD proteins were both expressed in insect cells (Figure 18). However, the 55 kD protein became > 50 fold more abundant by three days p.i. in

15 the bHEV ORF2 5' tr infection and was solely present in bHEV ORF2 5'-3' tr virus infections. A 53 kD protein was also secreted into supernatant media within the first day of infection with both viruses and reached maximal levels by three days p.i. The abundance of 53 kD secreted protein was

20 greater than 20 fold more abundant from insect cells infected with the bHEV ORF2 5'-3' tr virus than from cells infected with the bHEV ORF2 5' tr virus. The 55 kD protein was purified from cell lysates from both viral infections and the 53 kD protein was purified from supernatant medium

25 by the purification schemes described above. The amino and carboxy terminus of the secreted 53 kD protein have been identified as amino acids 112 and 578 of HEV ORF2 and the 53 kD protein has been shown to be antigenic in ELISA. The expected molecular weight of the 53 kD protein was 50 kD but

30 the protein was shown to have a molecular mass of approximately 53 kilodaltons by Mass spectroscopy.

Example 17

HEV ORF2 3' Proteolytic Cleavage Mutant Viruses

Table 11. Summary of HEV ORF2 gene expression results from Sf-9 insect cells infected with bHEV ORF2 3' proteolytic cleavage mutant viruses generated from bHEV ORF2 fl using standard site directed mutagenesis techniques.

virus mutant	602	603	604	605	606	607	613	634	cell assoc. products	secreted products
I ¹	A	P	R	S	V	L	M	Q	55.63 kD	-
II ²					A				55.63 kD	-
III ²					A				63 kD	72 kD low amounts
IV ²								P	55.63 kD	63 kD low amounts
Va ¹							F		72 kD	72 kD low amounts
Vb ¹						P	L		72 kD	72 kD low amounts
VI ²						P	P		63 kD	72 kD low amounts

¹ Virus infections harvested at 24 hr. post-infection.

² Virus infections harvested at 48 hr. post-infection.

° Site directed PCR mutagenesis of the 112-607 bHEV was also conducted using an oligonucleotide primer containing the AUU codon and surrounding nucleotides at amino acid 578 (HEV ORF2 Pakistani strain) to create a substitution of arginine with isoleucine at amino acid 578. 5 Other mutants of the 112-607 bHEV included those with amino acid substitution of arginine with glycine, serine or glutamic acid at amino acid 578. These mutants were constructed as described above using oligonucleotide primers containing codons for the desired amino acid changes. It is 10 believed that these 112-607 bHEV mutants will push the equilibrium of production of HEV ORF2 proteins towards a single protein.

Example 18

15 Vaccine Studies In Phesus Rhesus Monkeys

Primates. Thirty-two rhesus monkeys (Macacca mulatta) that were HEV antibody (anti-HEV) negative (<1.10) in a sensitive ELISA (Tsarev SA, et al. J Infect Dis (1993);89:369-78) were used in this study.

20 HEV challenge stock. The Pakistani HEV strain SAR-55 [Iqbal M., et al. J. Trop. Med. Hyg. 1989;40, 438-443] (human feces) or the Mexican HEV strain Mex-14 [Velazquez O, et al. JAMA (1990);263:3281-5] (monkey feces, provided by the CDC) was used as a source of challenge 25 virus. A suspension [in cynomolgus (Macacca fascicularis) seronegative serum] of feces containing the Pakistani or the Mexican HEV strain diluted to contain 10,000 monkey infectious doses (MID₅₀) were used for intravenous inoculation of animals.

30 Inocula for immunization. 55 kDa ORF-2 protein [Tsarev SA, et al. Prospects for prevention of hepatitis E. In: Enterically transmitted hepatitis viruses. (Y. Buisson, P. Coursaget, M. Kane eds). La Simarre, Joueles-Tours, France, (1996) p. 373-383] purified from infected 35 insect cells (infected with recombinant baculovirus

° containing the complete ORF2) was precipitated with alum as described [Tsarev S.A. et al. Proc Natl Acad Sci USA, (1994);191:10198-202]. The efficiency of precipitation was higher than 99%, as determined by ELISA analysis of the residual soluble antigen. The protein-alum complex was
5 stored at +4°C for up to 1 year.

Inoculation Schedule.

Rhesus monkeys were vaccinated by intramuscular injection of 0.5 ml of vaccine containing 50µg, 10µg, 2µg or 0.4µg of the alum-precipitated 55 kDa protein. Two doses
10 were administered one month apart. Other animals were injected with 0.5 ml of alum suspension lacking the recombinant protein (placebo).

Monitoring of primates. Percutaneous needle biopsies of the liver and samples of serum and feces were
15 collected prior to inoculation and weekly for 15 weeks after inoculation. Sera were assayed for levels of alanine amino transferase (ALT) with commercially available tests (Metpath Inc., Rockville, MD). Biochemical evidence of hepatitis was defined as a two-fold or greater increase in the post-inoculation/pre-inoculation ratio of ALT. Liver biopsy was
20 performed and histopathology was scored as described [Tsarev S.A. et al. Proc Natl Acad Sci USA, (1994);191:10198-202]. clinical evaluation of the animals was performed blindly. The anti-HEV ELISA, and reverse transcriptase-polymerase
25 chain reaction (RT-PCR) were performed as described [Tsarev S.A. et al. Proc Natl Acad Sci USA, 1994;191:10198-202]. For quantification, PCR-positive consecutive sera or feces from each animal were combined and serially diluted in ten-fold increments in calf serum. One hundred µl of each
30 dilution were used for RNA extraction and RT-PCR. The PCR protocol used in this study could detect as few as 10 MID₅₀ of HEV per ml of serum and as few as 100 MID₅₀ per gram of feces.

Statistical Analysis. Student t-tests were used
35 for pairwise comparison of quantitative parameters of

° hepatitis and HEV infection for a placebo group versus the post-exposure vaccination group, and for a placebo group versus the group challenged with the heterologous virus. The Dunnett test was used for multiple comparison of the placebo group versus groups vaccinated with different doses
5 of the recombinant vaccine. The Tukley test was used for multiple comparisons of anti-HEV titers at the time of challenge in animals vaccinated with different doses.

For statistical analysis, serum samples that contained <10 HEV genomes in 1 ml of serum were assigned a
10 titer of 1:1 and fecal samples that contained <100 HEV genomes in 1 g of feces were assigned a titer of 1:10.

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RESULTS

Hepatitis E infection in the placebo groups. Each of the four rhesus monkeys vaccinated with alum alone and challenged with the SAR-55 strain of HEV developed hepatitis: post/pre peak ALT ratios in these animals were significantly higher than the cut-off value of 2.0 and ranged from 3.1 to 10.6 (Table 12).

Table 12. HEV infection in rhesus monkeys inoculated with a placebo or with different amounts of the recombinant HEV ORF-2 protein prior to challenge with homologous virus.

Vaccination (Sar-55 ORF-2 protein)				Challenge (Sar-55 strain)			
Inocula and animals	Anti-HEV titer after one vaccine dose	Anti-HEV titer at time of challenge (two vaccine doses)	Post/pre ratio of peak ALT	Histopathology (cumulative score)	Log ₁₀ titer†	HEV genome in serum* Number of weeks	HEV genome in feces* Log ₁₀ titer† Number of weeks
Placebo							
Rh 6051	< 1:10	< 1:10	3.1	4.5+	4	6	6
Rh 6067	< 1:10	< 1:10	3.9	6.0+	4	5	7
Rh 5984	< 1:10	< 1:10	10.6	5.0+	4	5	7
Rh 5985	< 1:10	< 1:10	8.5	4.5+	3	5	5
Vaccine							
2 x 50 µg							
Rh 6068	1:10,000	1:10,000	1.1	0+	2	3	4
Rh 6063	1:1,000	1:10,000	1.2	0+	3	2	3
Rh 6074	1:10,000	1:10,000	1.1	0+	<1	0	1
Rh 6071	1:1,000	1:1,000	1.1	0+	2	5	6
Vaccine							
2 x 10 µg							
Rh 5991	1:1,000	1:1,000	1.4	0+	3	6	5
Rh 5989	1:1,000	1:10,000	1.1	0+	3	4	5
Rh 5974	1:1,000	1:10,000	1.0	0+	2	6	7
Rh 5972	1:1,000	1:1,000	0.9	0+	<1	0	1

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0
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As measured by RT-PCR

Determined on pooled positive samples.

° Hepatitis was confirmed by the results of the histologic tests. The cumulative histopathology score ranged from 4.5+ to 6.0+. Viremia and virus excretion were monitored in each animal. Viremia was present for 5 to 6 weeks and virus was excreted a total of 5 to 7 weeks. 5 Positive serum or fecal samples were combined and HEV genome titers were determined in those pools for every animal. The HEV genome titer ranged from 10^3 to 10^4 in pooled sera and from 10^6 to 10^8 in pooled fecal samples. The HEV genome titers were comparable to those we reported previously for 10 cynomolgus monkeys challenged with the same SAR-55 strain of HEV (Tsarev S.A. et al. Proc Natl Acad Sci USA, (1994);191:10198-202). Duration of viremia and virus excretion were also comparable.

Each of the four animals challenged with the Mex- 15 14 strain of HEV developed hepatitis with quantitative parameters of disease, excepting histopathology scores, similar to those of animals challenged with the SAR-55 strain (Table 13).

Table 13. HEV infection in rhesus monkeys inoculated with a placebo or with different amounts of the recombinant HEV ORF-2 protein prior to challenge with homologous virus.

Vaccination (Sar-55 ORF-2 protein)				Challenge (Sar-55 strain)			
Inocula and animals	Anti-HEV titer after one vaccine dose	Anti-HEV titer at time of challenge (two vaccine doses)	Post/pre ratio of peak ALT	Histopathology (cumulative score)	HEV genome in serum*		HEV genome in feces* Number of weeks
					Log ₁₀ titer†	Number of weeks	
Placebo							
Rh 5996	<1:10	<1:10	4.8	1.0+	4	4	6 5
Rh 6044	<1:10	<1:10	4.7	1.0+	4	4	6 4
Rh 6045	<1:10	<1:10	7.6	1.5+	3	4	7 6
Rh 6046	<1:10	<1:10	2.7	1.0+	3	4	7 5
Vaccine							
2 x 50 µg							
Rh 5982	1:1,000	1:10,000	1.0	0+	1	1	2
Rh 5983	1:10,000	1:10,000	0.9	0+	2	3	4
Rh 5994	1:1,000	1:1,000	1.0	0+	2	4	2
Rh 5995	1:10,000	1:10,000	1.8	0+	<1	0	<2 0

* As measured by RT-PCR

† Determined on pooled positive samples.

Quantitative parameters of infection were also similar in the two groups of animals. Thus, the HEV challenge stocks were able to produce hepatitis in each and every challenged animal and therefore could be used for validation of vaccine efficacy against hepatitis E.

Hepatitis E infection in the post-exposure vaccinated group. Four animals were challenged with the SAR-55 strain. Forty-eight hours after challenge these animals were vaccinated with 50 μ g dose of vaccine followed by a booster dose (50 μ g) one month later. Significant differences in parameters of disease or infection were not found in this group compared to the placebo group, with the exception that the duration of viremia and viral excretion were reduced 1.5 fold and 1.7 fold respectively (data not shown).

Vaccination. All primates vaccinated with the 50 μ g, 10 μ g or 2 μ g dose of vaccine and 3 of 4 primates vaccinated with the 0.4 μ g dose of the recombinant protein seroconverted to HEV after the first immunization (Tables 12 and 13). A direct correlation between vaccine dose and anti-HEV titer was observed following the first dose; a geometric mean (GM) of 1:32 for the 0.4 μ g dose, 1:316 for the 2 μ g dose, 1:1,000 for the 10 μ g dose, and 1:3,200 for the 50 μ g dose. When the second dose of vaccine was administered, dose-related differences in GM titers were still observed one month after second vaccination, but the range was narrower (between 1:1,800 and 1:5,600 as seen in Table 14).

Table 14. Summary of HEV infection after homologous or heterologous challenge.

Vaccination (Sar-55 ORF-2 protein)				Challenge Results			
Category (4 animals/ category)	Anti-HEV GM* titer	Post/pre ratio of peak GM* ALT	Histopatho- logy (mean cumulative score)	HEV genome in serum†		HEV genome in feces†	
				GM* titer (log ₁₀)	Mean number of weeks	GM* titer (log ₁₀)	Mean number of weeks
SAR-55 Placebo	< 1:10	5.7	5+	3.8	5.3	6.5	6.3
Vaccine							
2 x 50 µg	1:5,600	1.1 ^(s)	0+ ^(s)	1.8 ^(s)	2.5 ^(N)	3.5 ^(s)	3.5 ^(s)
2 x 10 µg	1:3,200	1.1 ^(s)	0+ ^(s)	2.0 ^(s)	4.0 ^(N)	3.5 ^(s)	4.5 ^(s)
2 x 2 µg	1:1,800	1.0 ^(s)	0.1+ ^(s)	2.0 ^(s)	3.5 ^(N)	3.5 ^(s)	3.8 ^(s)
2 x 0.4 µg	1:1,800	1.1 ^(S)	0.3+ ^(S)	1.8 ^(S)	1.8 ^(S)	1.8 ^(s)	2.5 ^(s)
Mex-14							
Placebo	< 1:10	4.6	1.1+	3.5	4	6.5	5.0
Vaccine							
2 x 50 µg	1:5,600	0.9 ^(S)	0+ ^(S)	1.3 ^(S)	2.0 ^(N)	2.3 ^(S)	2.0 ^(S)

* Geometric mean.

† As measured by RT-PCR.

^(s) Statistically significant difference compared to placebo group (p < 0.05).

⁽ⁿ⁾ Statistically insignificant difference compared to placebo group (p > 0.05).

Statistical analysis using a multiple comparison test for anti-HEV GM titers indicated that the dose-related differences in GM titers after two doses of vaccine were not significant. At this time the rhesus monkeys were challenged.

Homologous challenges. All 16 animals vaccinated with any of the four doses of vaccine were protected against hepatitis according to the biochemical criterion since none developed elevated serum ALT levels (Table 12). Histological changes were found only in two of the 16 animals and these had received the two lowest doses of vaccine. The histological abnormalities were minimal and in one of these two animals (rhesus-5978) might not even be related to HEV infection because similar abnormalities were found in pre-inoculation liver samples also. Overall, all four groups of animals vaccinated twice with 50 μ g, 10 μ g, 2 μ g or 0.4 μ g doses of vaccine were protected against hepatitis and quantitative parameters of hepatitis E in each of these four groups were statistically different from those in the placebo group (Table 14).

Although animals in all vaccinated groups were protected against hepatitis E disease, they were not protected against infection with HEV. Even though virus titers in vaccinated animals were statistically lower than those in the placebo groups, duration of viremia and viral excretion were not significantly reduced in the majority of cases. Compared to the placebo group, the level of viremia in the vaccinated animals was reduced about 80-fold and level of viral excretion was reduced about 1,000 fold on average. Two animals were protected against viremia, with the Mex-14 HEV strain, the most genetically and geographically different from the vaccine strain, were protected against hepatitis by administration of two 50 μ g doses of recombinant vaccine (Table 13). Histological or biochemical evidence of hepatitis was not detected in any of these animals. When immunized animals were compared as a

group to the placebo group, the differences in the expression of disease were statistically significant (Table 14). However, as in the case of homologous challenge, most animals were not protected against infection with HEV. Both viremia and viral excretion were detected in three animals; the fourth animal experienced neither and therefore was completely protected against infection. Levels of viremia and viral excretion were significantly reduced (about 180-fold and 1,800-fold) when compared to animals vaccinated with the placebo. The difference in duration of viral excretion was significant but that of viremia was not.

In sum, these experiments demonstrated that a dose of the recombinant protein as low as 0.4 μ g administered twice protected rhesus monkeys from hepatitis. Significant differences in anti-HEV GM titers after two doses of vaccine ranging from 0.4 μ g to 50 μ g were not observed. When challenged with the homologous virus strain, all vaccinated animals were protected against hepatitis E as measured by ALT elevations and only two animals, both of which received the lower dose of vaccine, had minimal histopathology. The protective effect of the vaccine was quantified by multi-group comparison which indicated that, with the exception of the post-exposure vaccinated group, quantitative parameters of hepatitis in all vaccinated primates were lower than those in the placebo group, and this difference was statistically significant. In addition, vaccinated animals which received the 50 μ g dose of the vaccine twice, the only dose tested, were protected from heterologous challenge with the most genetically and geographically distant strain of HEV identified to date. In contrast, post-exposure vaccination was not successful. All animals which were vaccinated 48 hours after challenge developed hepatitis according to both biochemical and histological criteria.

Although seropositive primates were protected against hepatitis E after challenge with a high dose of HEV most of them were not protected against HEV infection. This

is perhaps not surprising since this virus, which is normally transmitted by the oral route, was administered intravenously to assure uniformity of exposure. However, extent of infection as measured by levels of viremia and viral excretion was significantly reduced in all vaccinated animals compared to placebo animals. And in fact, one animal challenged with the heterologous strain was completely protected against infection with HEV and two animals challenged with the homologous strain of HEV excreted virus but did not have detectable viremia. The higher percentage of animals completely protected against infection in our previous study (Tsarev S.A. et al. Proc Natl Acad Sci USA, (1994);191:10198-202] might be explained by the fact that in the previous study we used both 1,000 and 10,000 MID₅₀ doses of challenge virus while in this study we have used only the higher dose. Since there is a dose-dependent response to HEV infection in primates [Tsarev SA, et al. Prospects for prevention of hepatitis E. In: Enterically transmitted hepatitis viruses. (Y. Buisson, P. Coursaget, M. Kane eds). La Simarre, Joueles-Tours, France, 1996, p. 373-383], the higher dose was chosen to ensure that every non-vaccinated animal developed pronounced hepatitis.

In this and the previous study, it was demonstrated that, without exception, the viral titer in the serum was lower than that in feces (about 1,000-fold on average) in all placebo and vaccinated primates. That finding is consistent with the fact that HEV is transmitted by the fecal-oral route. In every vaccinated animal decreased levels of viremia and viral excretion were observed when compared to placebo animals. However, duration of viremia, although shorter in all vaccinated primates, was not significantly reduced compared to that in the placebos in most cases. Viremia has always paralleled HEV excretion in feces in the several dozen primates investigated. Therefore, serum samples might be used as the primary indicator of viral infection with the titer

- ° reflecting the level of HEV infection. That is an important observation because serum samples are usually more readily available than fecal samples.

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° CLAIMS

1. A DNA molecule having a sequence consisting essentially of the nucleotides which encode amino acids 112-607 of a hepatitis E virus open reading frame 2 protein.

2. A DNA molecule having a sequence consisting essentially of the nucleotides which encode amino acids 112-578 of a hepatitis E virus open reading frame 2 protein.

3. The DNA molecule of claim 1, wherein said molecule consists essentially of nucleotides which encode amino acids 112-607 of SEQ ID NO:2.

4. The DNA molecule of claim 3, wherein the sequence of said molecule has been mutated to encode a isoleucine residue at amino acid 578.

5. A recombinant protein consisting essentially of amino acids 112-607 of a hepatitis E virus open-reading frame 2 protein.

6. A recombinant protein consisting essentially of amino acids 112-578 of a hepatitis E virus open-reading frame 2 protein.

7. A recombinant expression vector comprising a DNA molecule according to claims 1-4.

8. A method of producing a recombinant hepatitis E virus protein, comprising:

- (a) culturing a host organism containing the expression vector of claim 7 under conditions appropriate to cause expression of said protein.

9. A host organism transformed or transfected with a recombinant expression vector according to claim 7.

10. A method of detecting antibodies to hepatitis E virus in a biological sample, said method comprising:
5 contacting the sample with a protein according to claims 5 or 6.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the biological sample is selected from the group consisting of
10 whole blood, plasma, serum, cerebrospinal fluid, tissue, urine and pleural fluid.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein IgM or IgG antibody is detected.

13. The method of claim 10, wherein the recombinant HEV protein is bound to a solid support.

14. The method of claim 10, wherein the immune
20 complex is detected using a labeled antibody.

15. A kit for use in a method of claim 10 comprising: said kit comprising a recombinant HEV protein according to claims 5 or 6.

16. The kit of claim 15 further comprising a labeled secondary antibody.

17. A pharmaceutical composition comprising the
30 protein of claim 5 and a suitable excipient, diluent or carrier.

18. A pharmaceutical composition comprising the
35 protein of claim 6 and a suitable excipient, diluent or carrier.

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19. A method of preventing hepatitis E, comprising administering the pharmaceutical composition of claim 17 to a mammal in an effective amount to stimulate the production of protective antibody.

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20. A vaccine for immunizing a mammal against hepatitis E infection, comprising a recombinant protein according to claim 5 in a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

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21. A method for detecting hepatitis E virus comprising: contacting a biological sample with antibodies to a protein according to claims 5 or 6 to form an immune complex with said hepatitis E virus.

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22. Anti-HEV antibodies having specific binding affinity for protein according to claims 5 or 6.

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23. The antibodies of claim 22, wherein said antibodies are monoclonal antibodies.

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24. A kit for preventing hepatitis E in a mammal, said kit comprising a protein according to claim 5.

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ABSTRACT

The invention relates to the expression of open reading frame 2 (ORF-2) proteins of a strain of hepatitis E virus from Pakistan (SAR-55) in a eukaryotic expression system. The expressed proteins can serve as an antigen in diagnostic immunoassays and/or as an immunogen or vaccine to protect against infection by hepatitis E.

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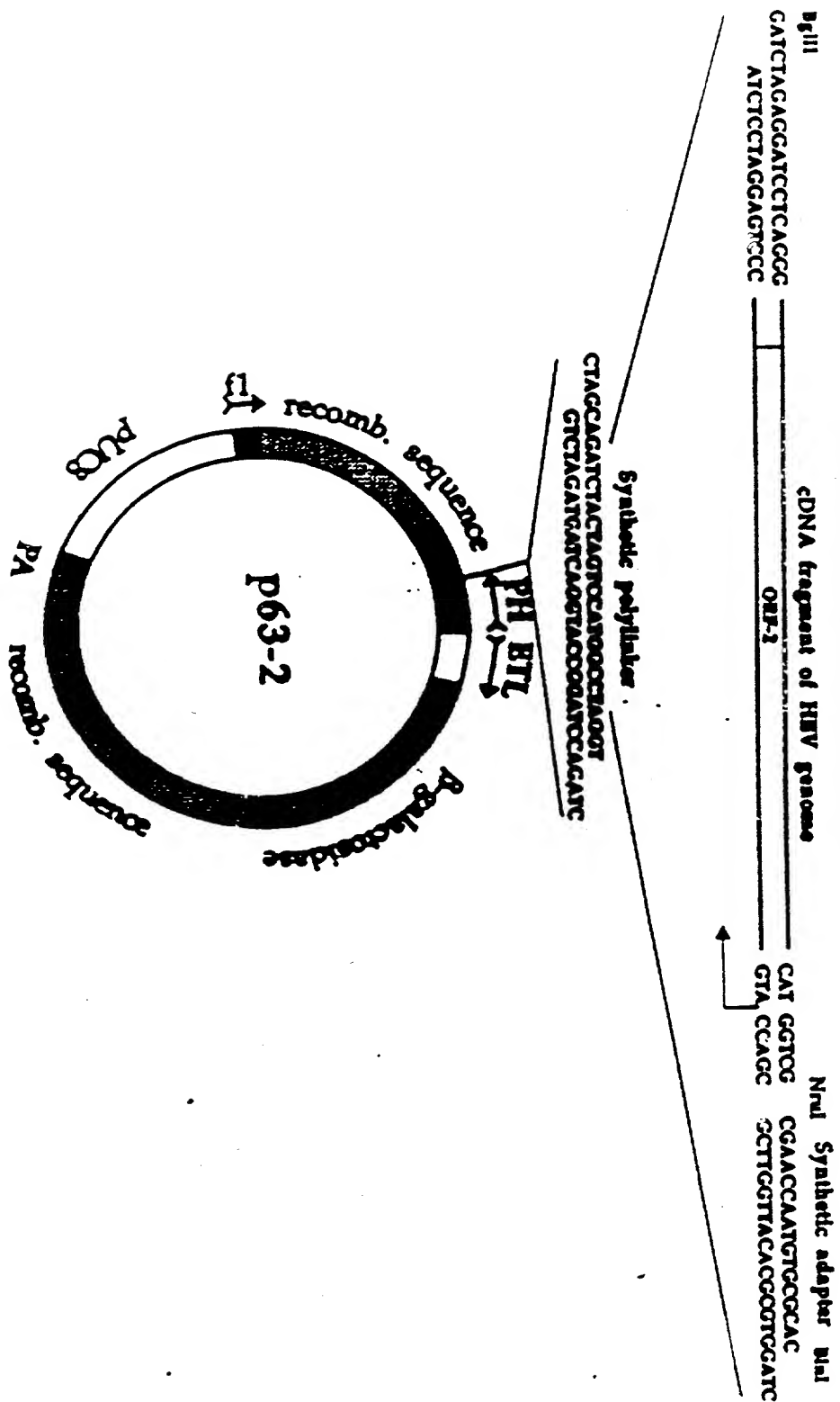


Figure 1

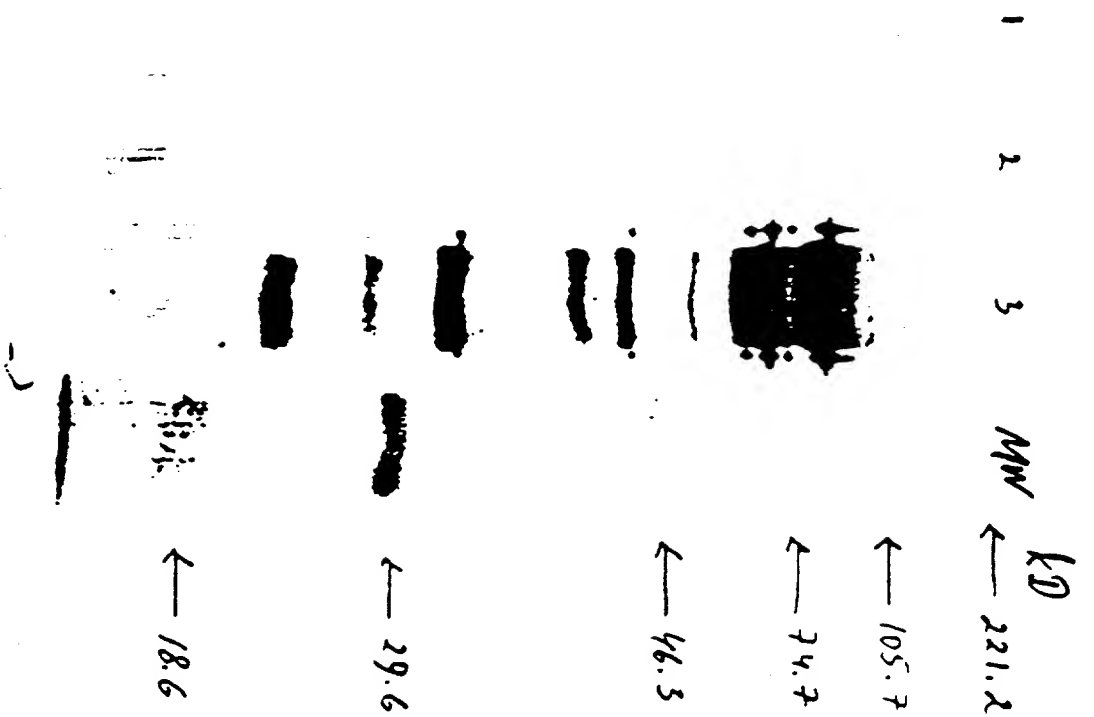
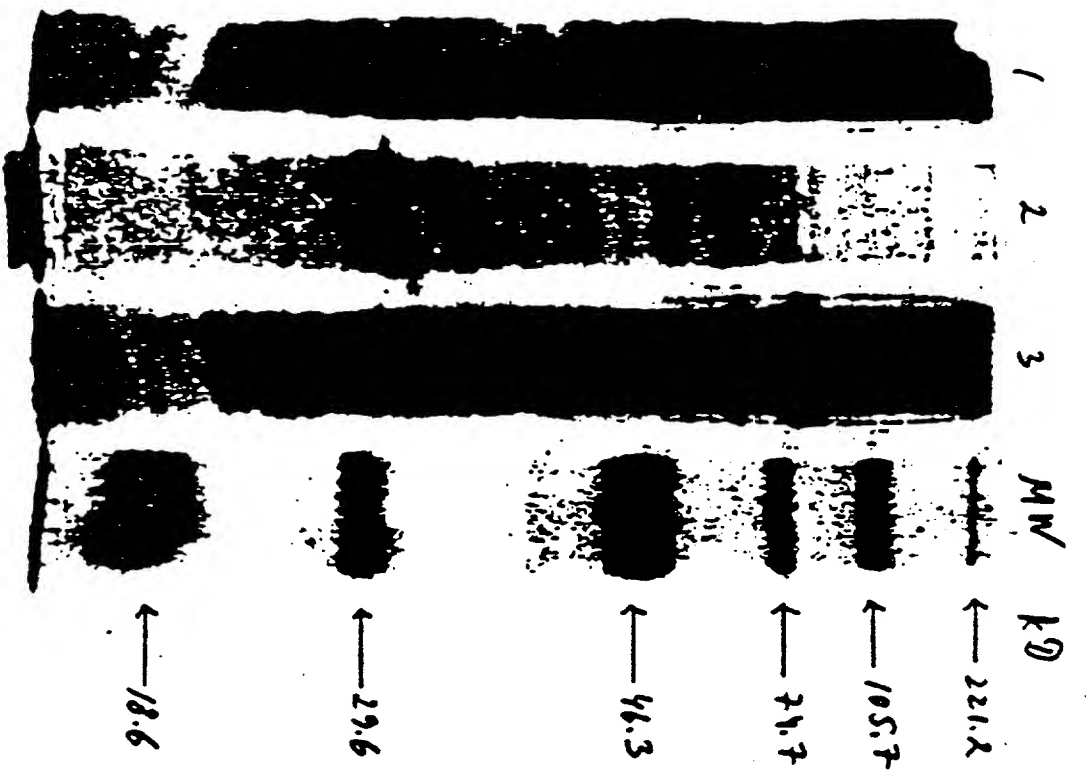


Figure 2

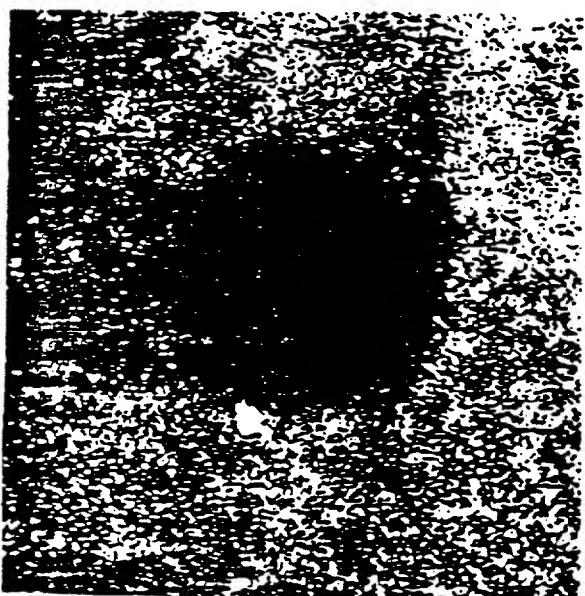
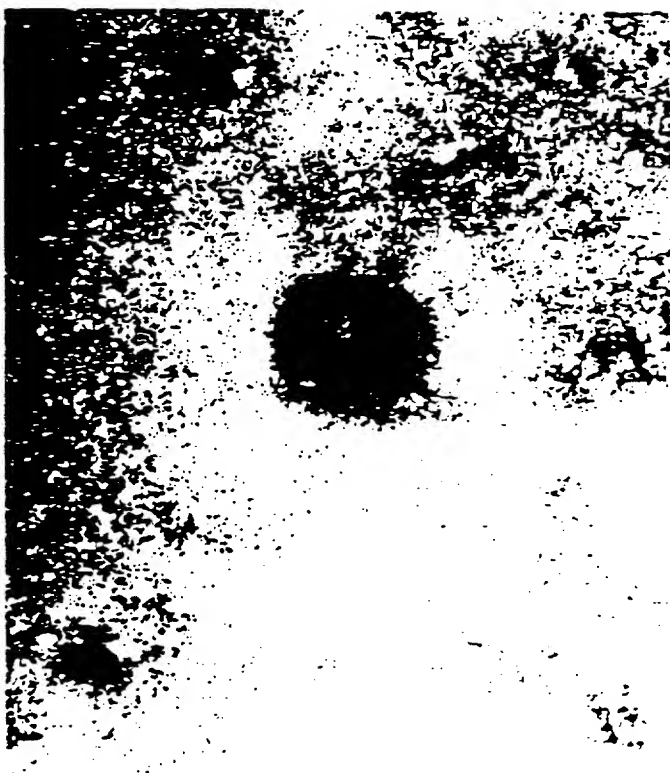


Figure 3A

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Figure 3B

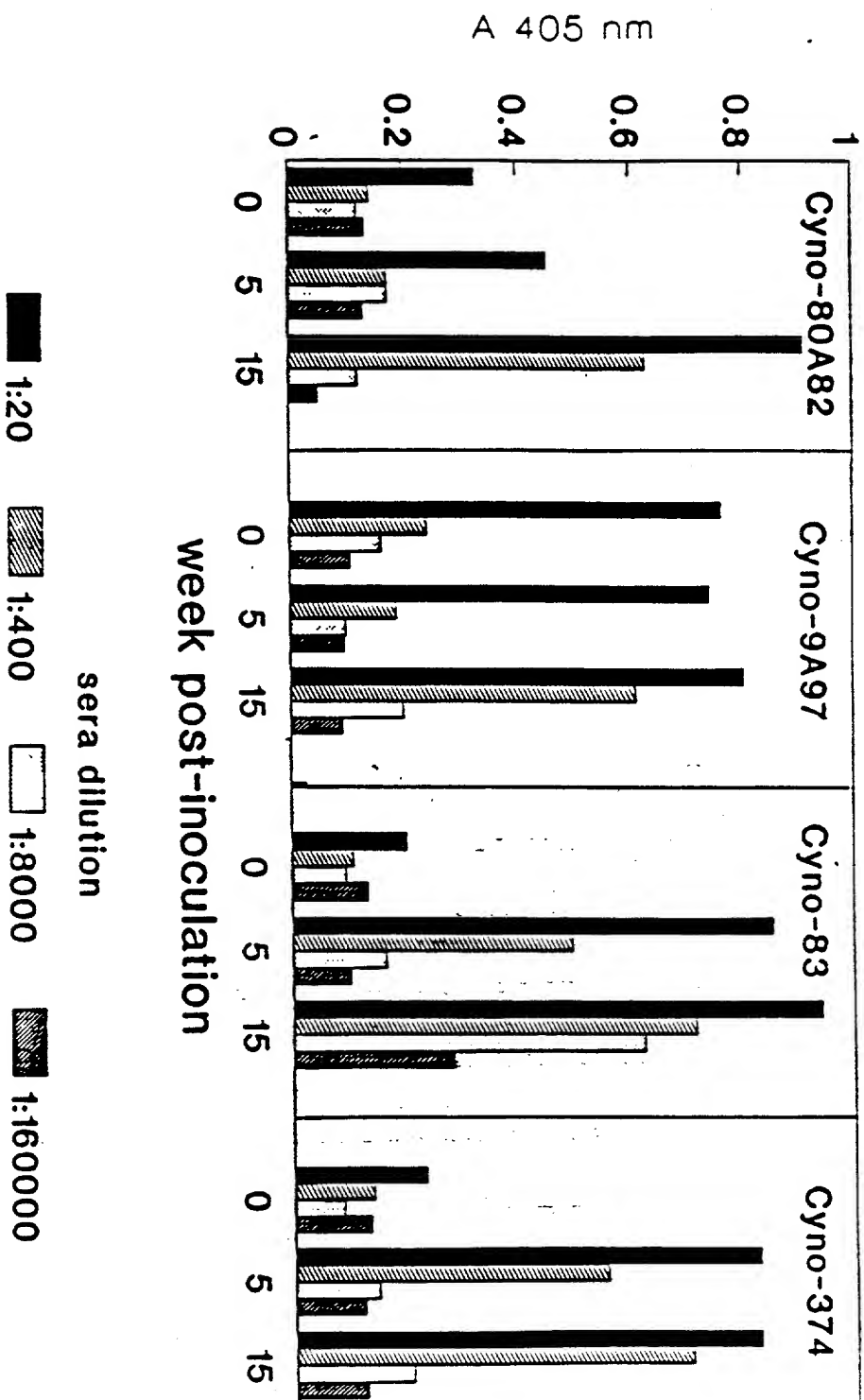


Figure 4

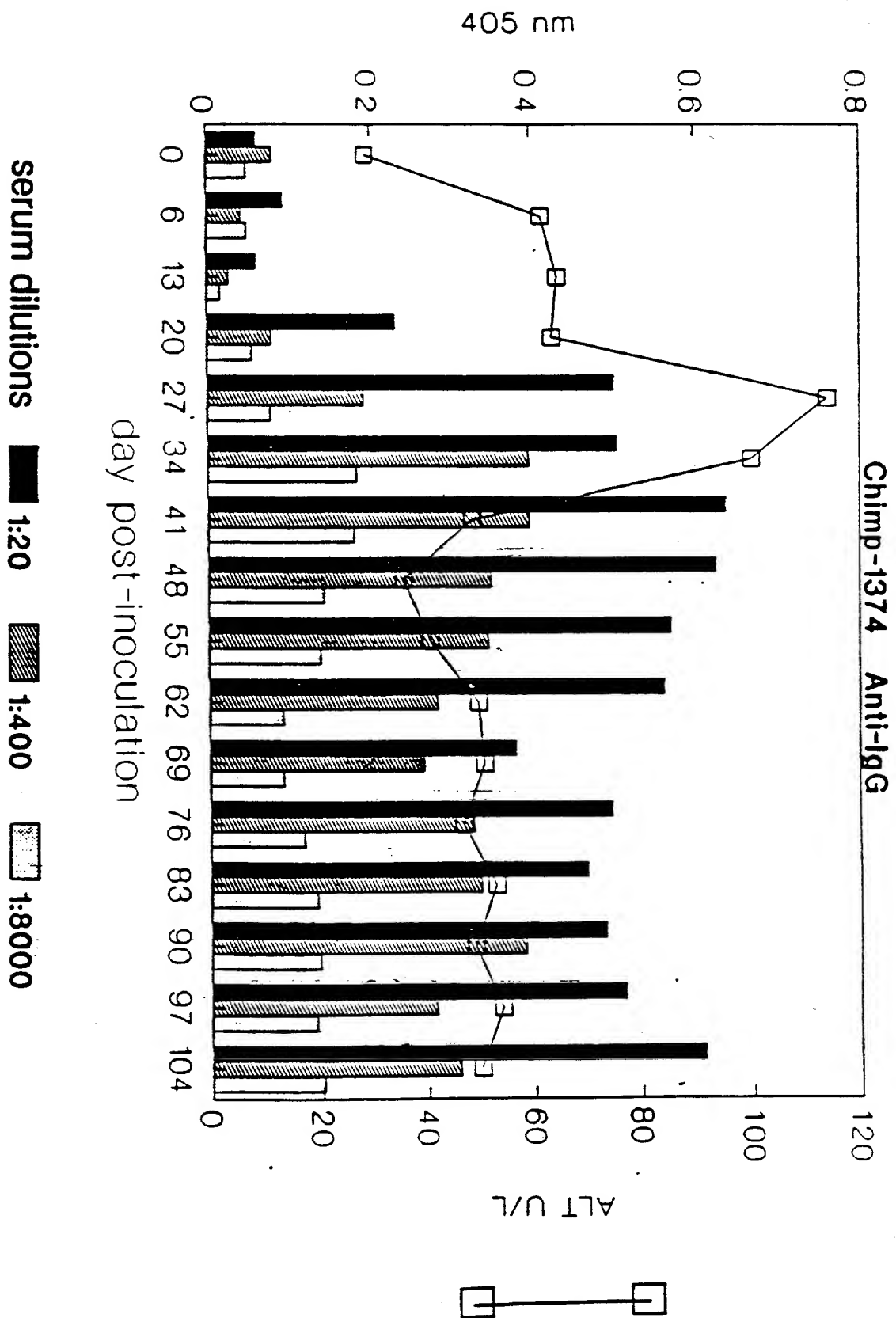


Figure 5A

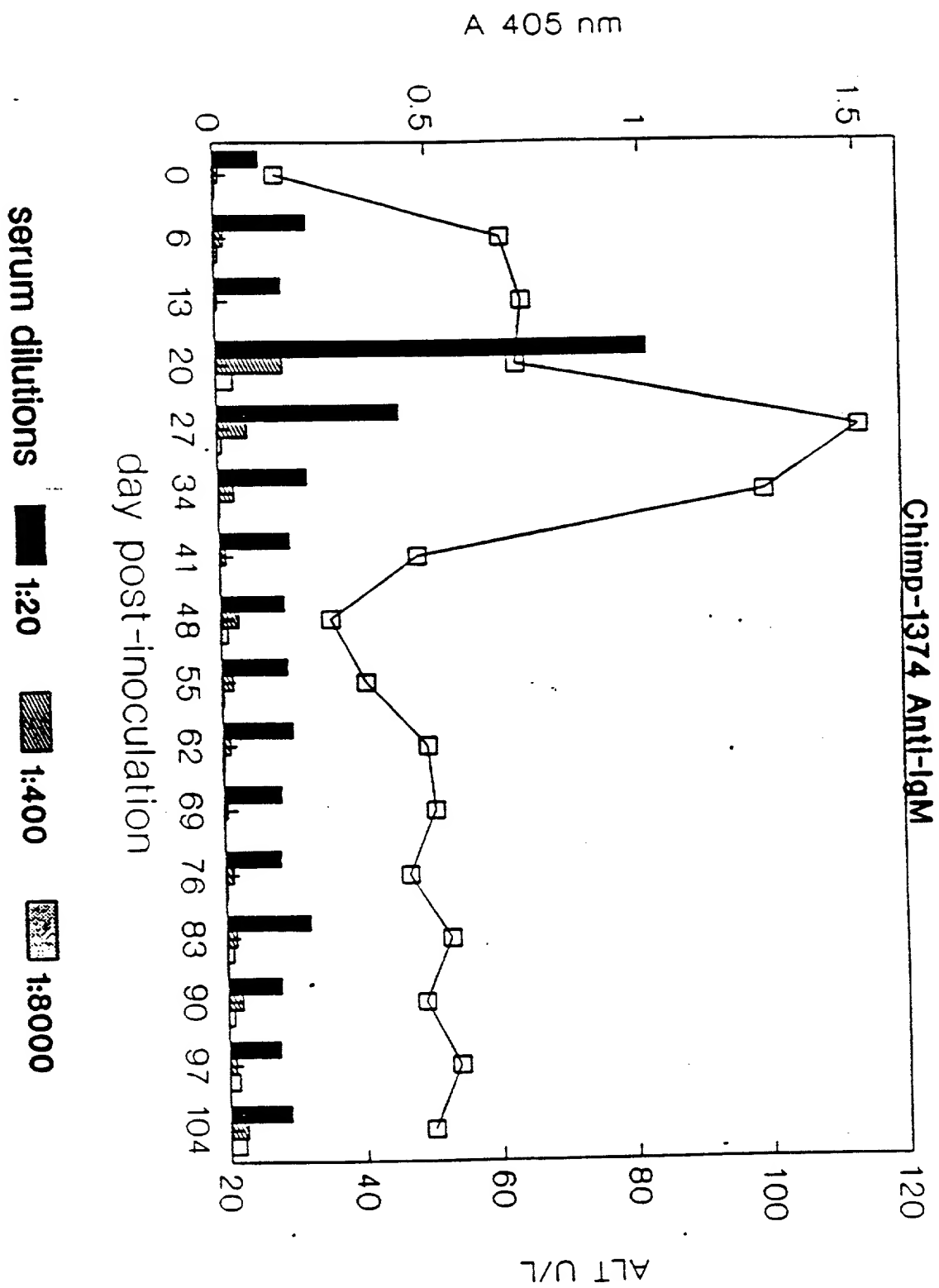


Figure 5B

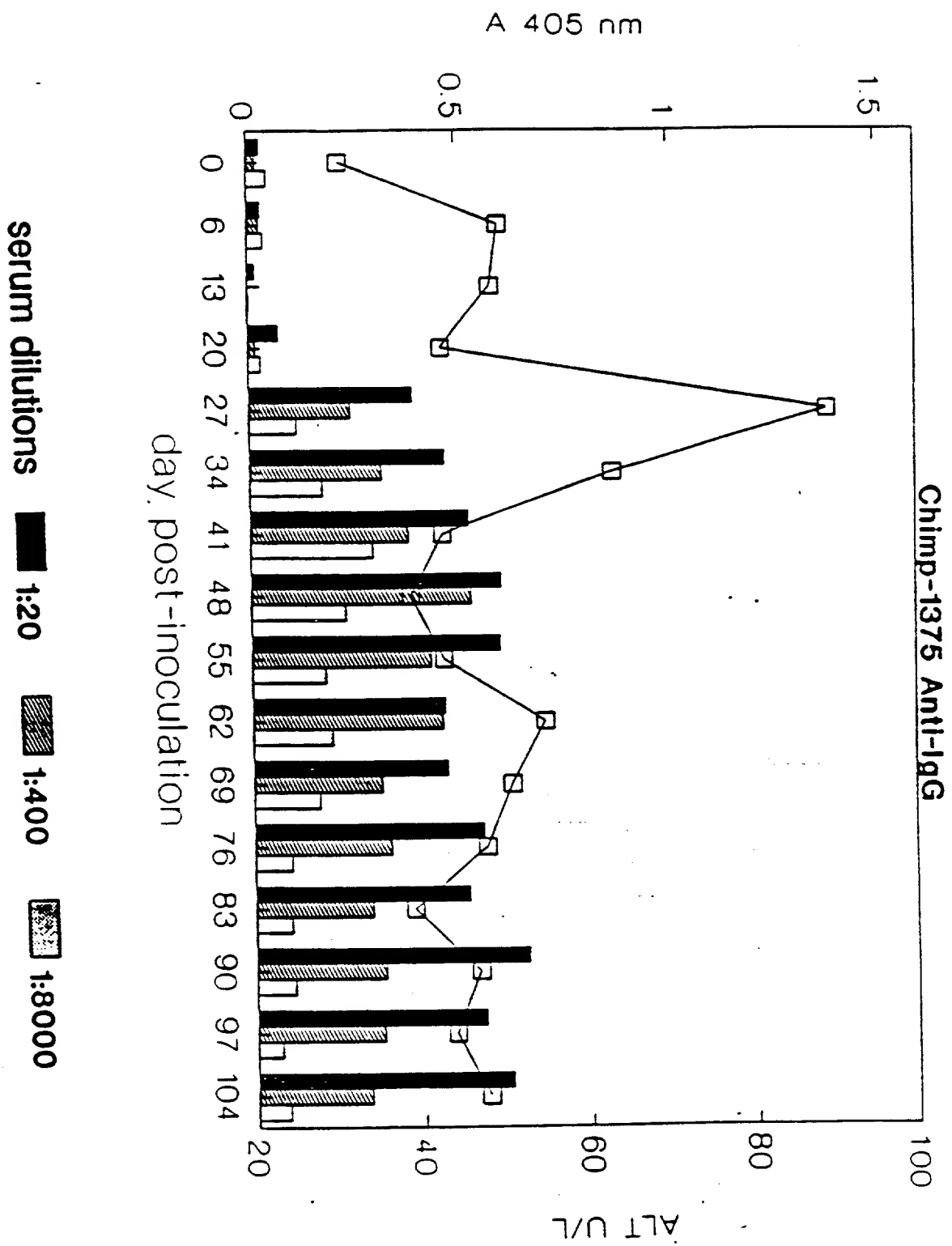


Figure 5C

Figure 5C is a dual-axis chart showing ALT levels (bars) and Chimp-1375 Anti-IgG absorbance (line) over 104 days post-inoculation. The left y-axis is ALT U/L (20-100) and the right y-axis is A 405 nm (0-1.5). Serum dilutions are indicated by bar patterns: 1:20 (solid black), 1:400 (diagonal lines), and 1:8000 (dotted).

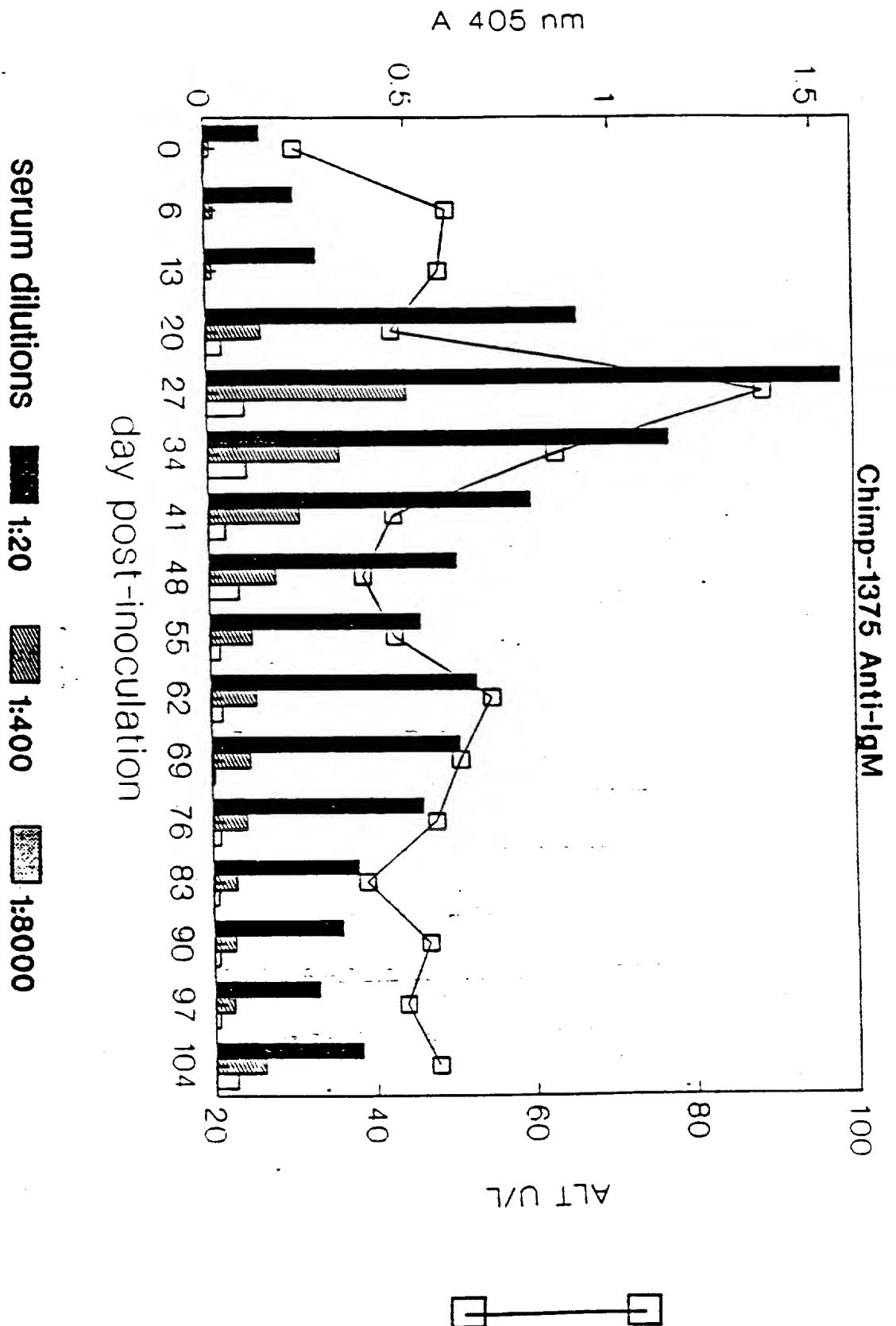


Figure 5D

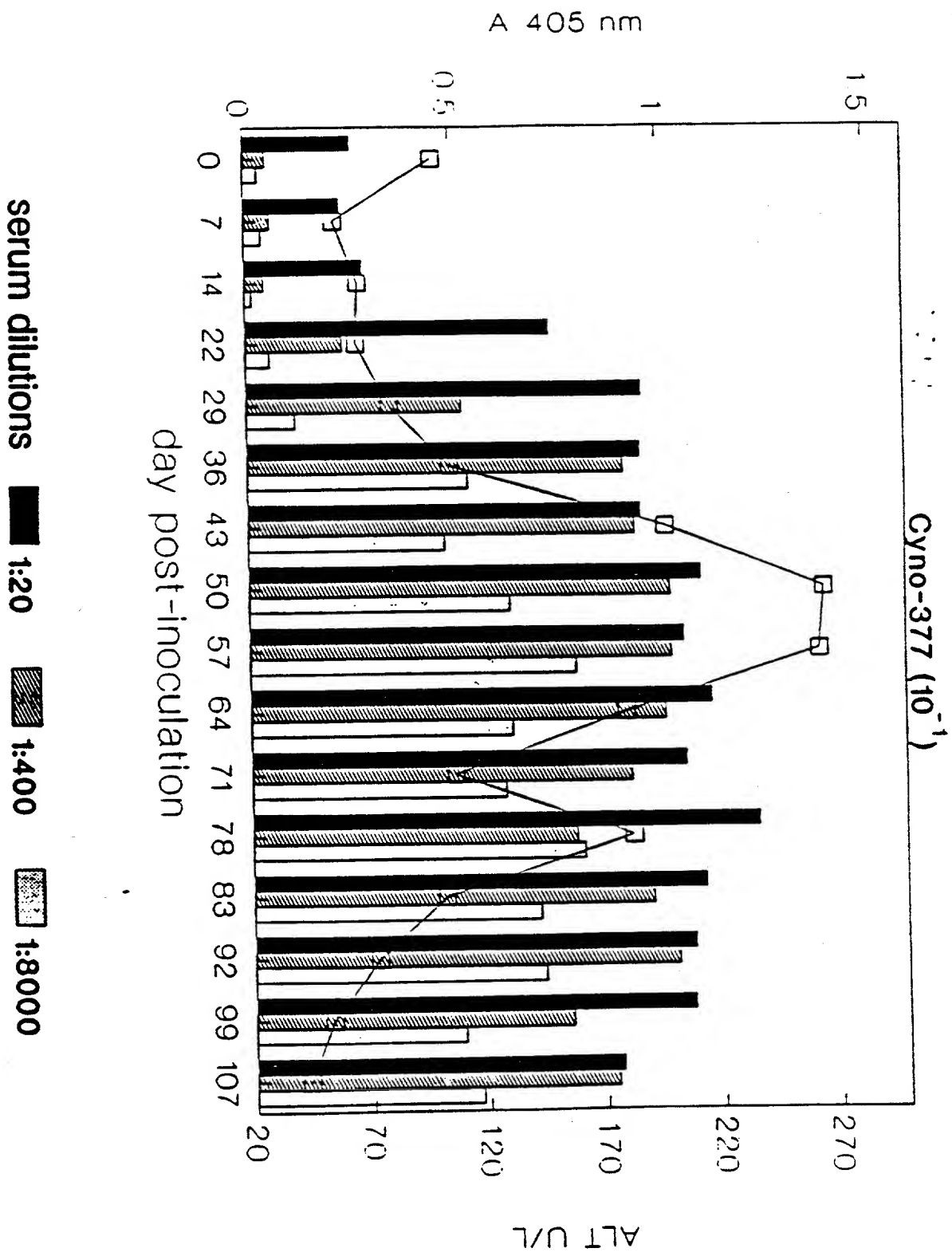


Figure 6A

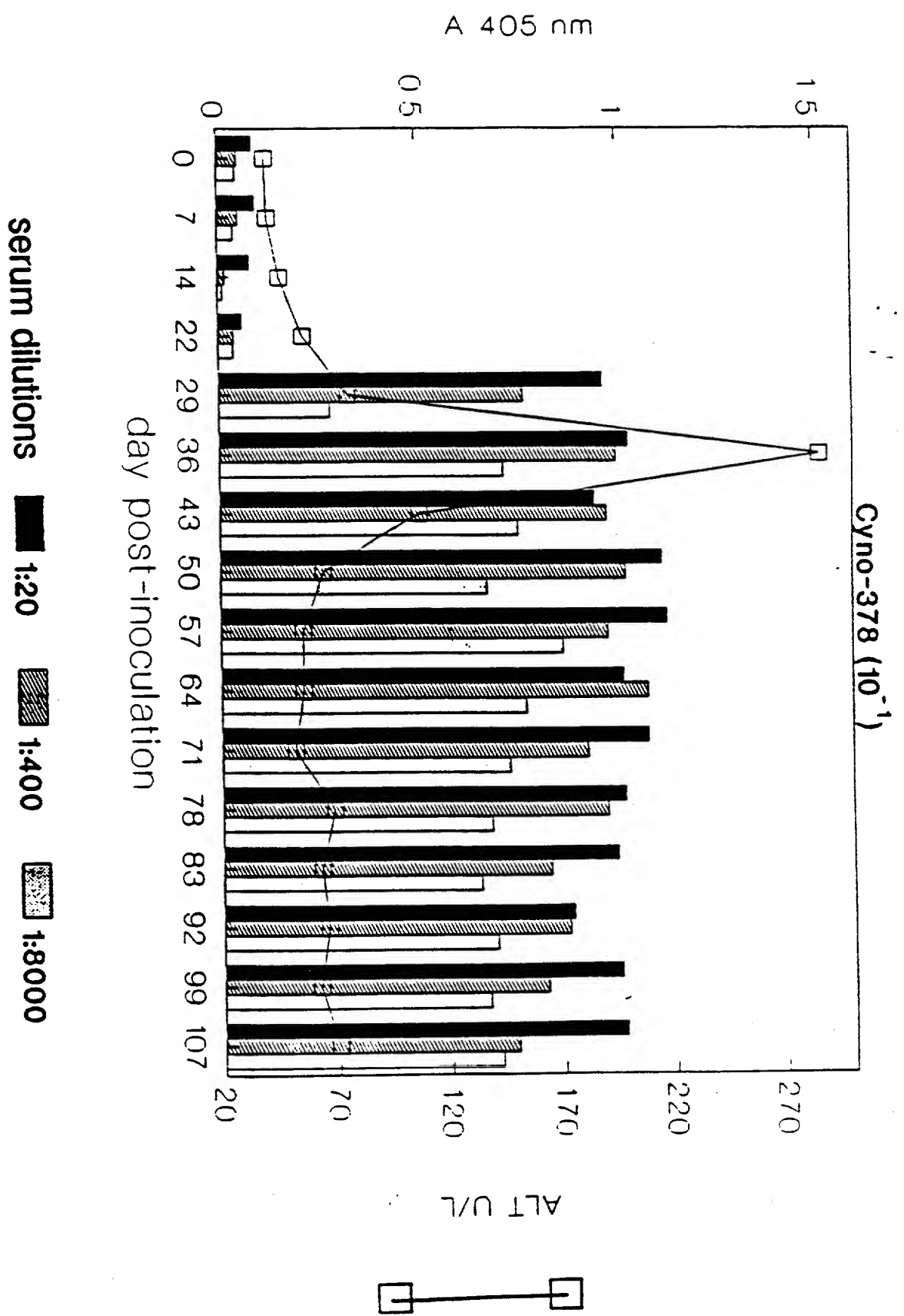


Figure 6B

Figure 6B is a dual-axis chart showing ALT U/L (bars) and Cyno-378 (10⁻¹) (line) over 107 days post-inoculation. The chart includes a legend for serum dilutions (1:20, 1:400, 1:8000) and an A 405 nm scale.

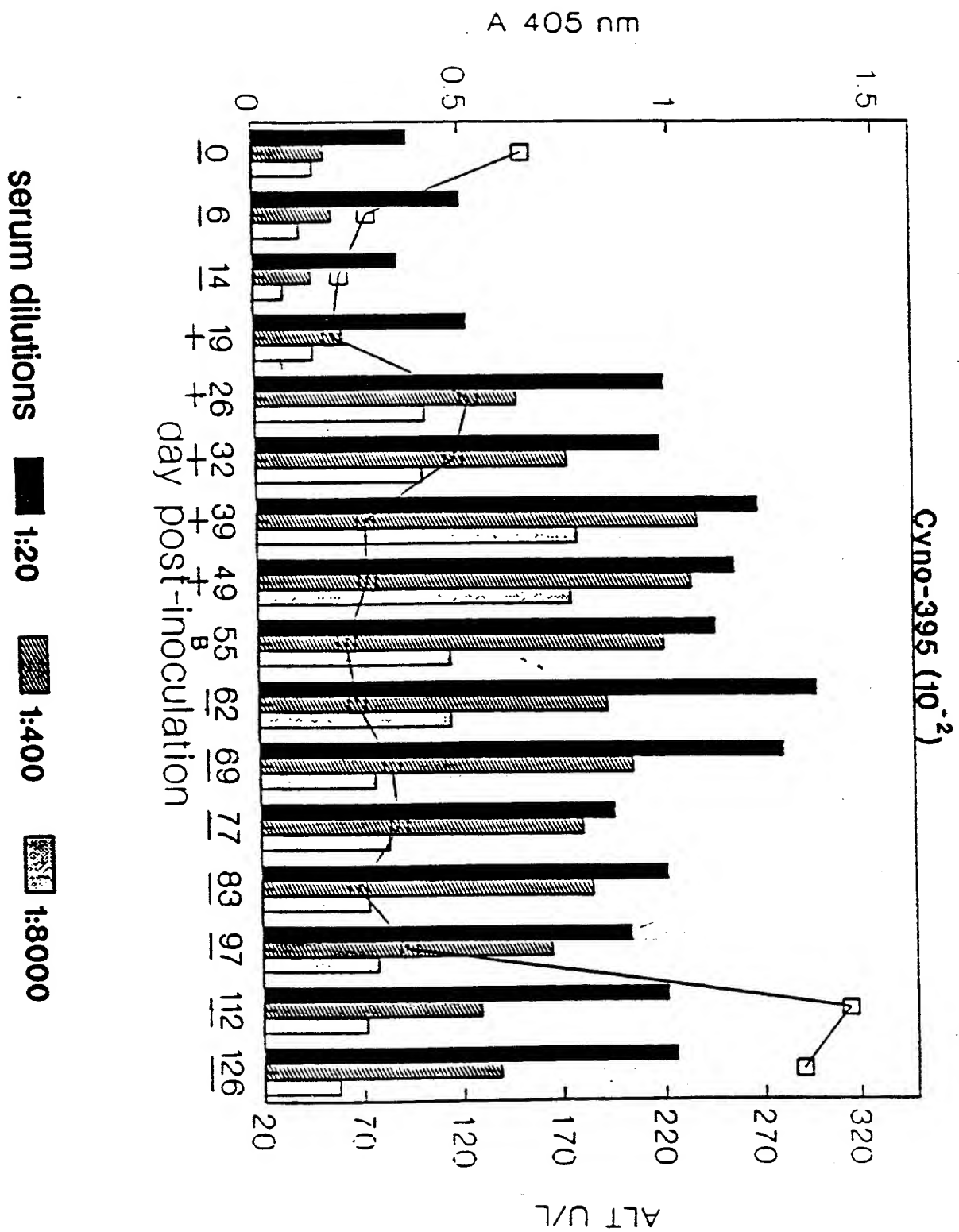


Figure 6C

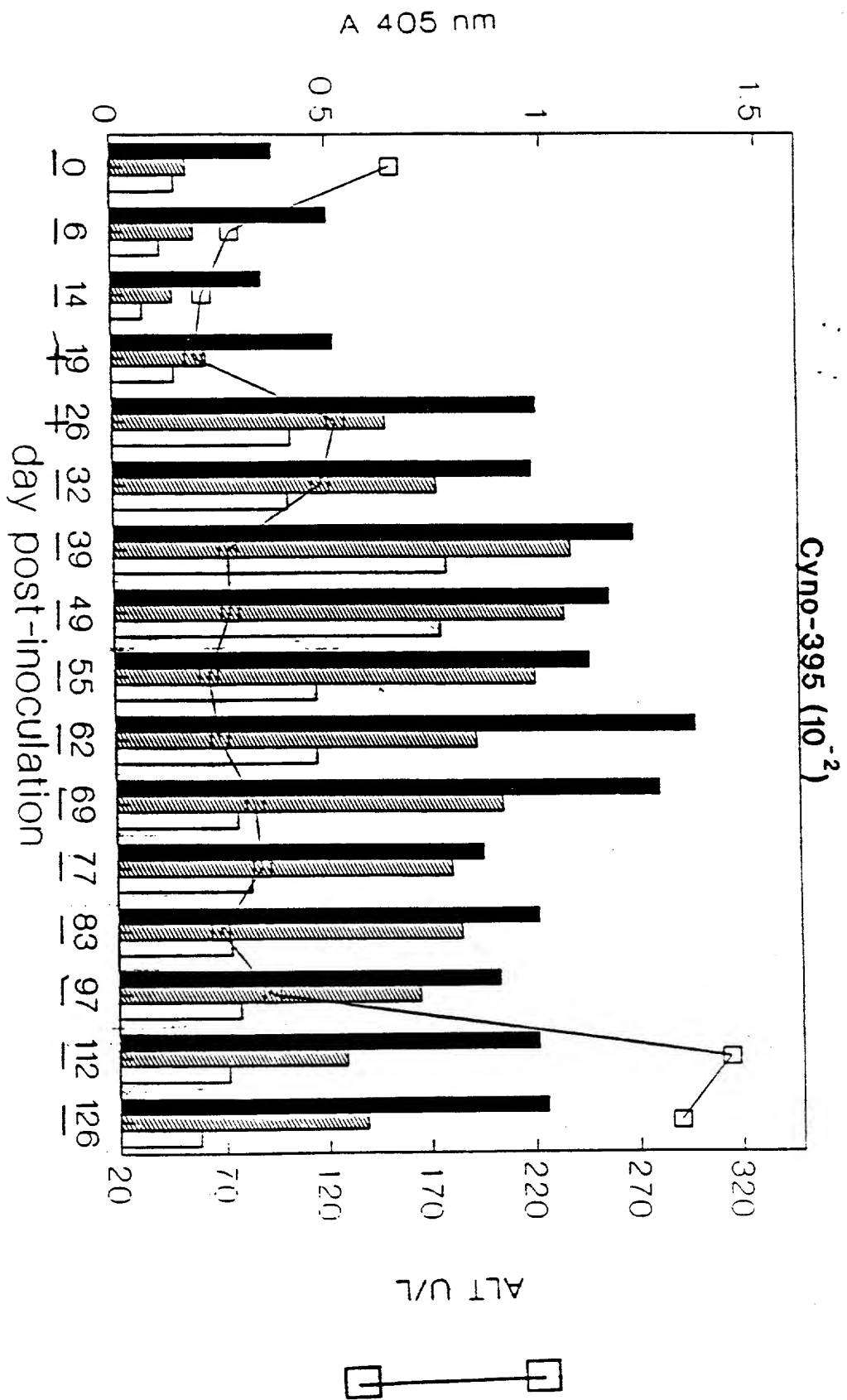


Figure 6D

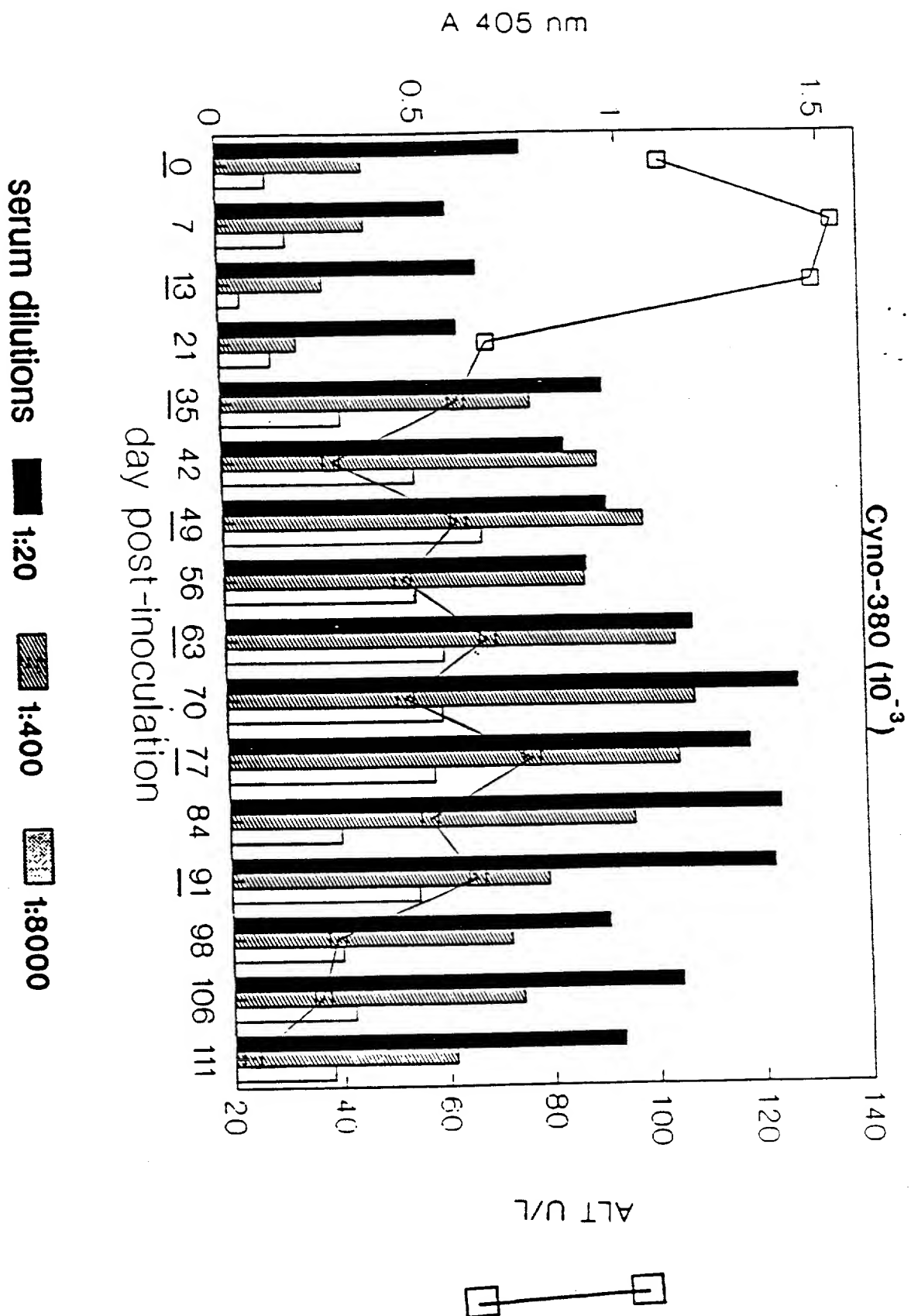


Figure 6E

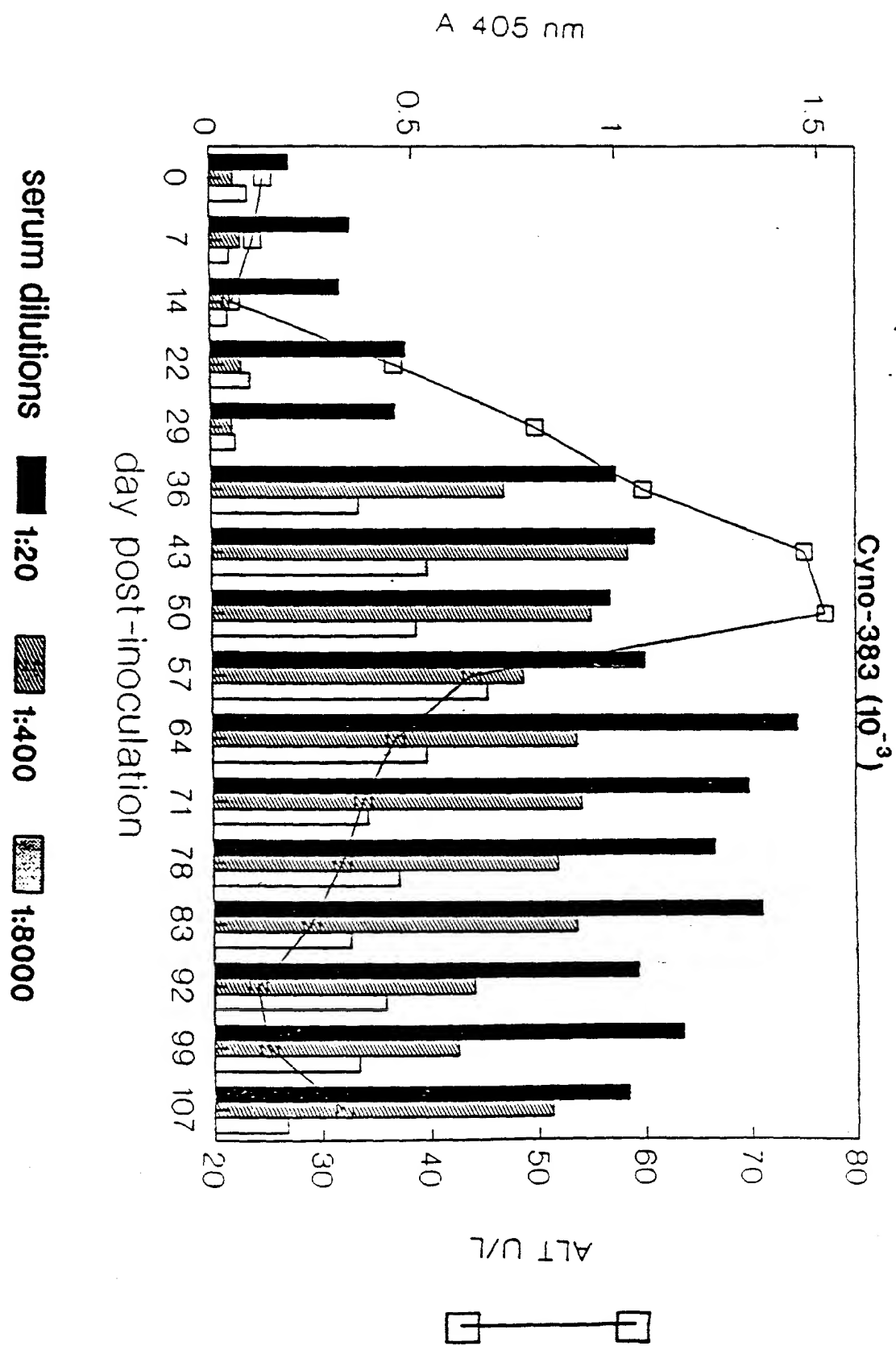


Figure 6F

Figure 6F shows the ALT levels and Cyno-383 levels over time. The ALT levels are shown as bars and the Cyno-383 levels are shown as a line graph. The ALT levels are measured in U/L and the Cyno-383 levels are measured in 10⁻³. The ALT levels are shown for three different serum dilutions: 1:20, 1:400, and 1:8000. The Cyno-383 levels are shown for the 1:20 dilution. The ALT levels are shown for days 0, 7, 14, 22, 29, 36, 43, 50, 57, 64, 71, 78, 83, 92, 99, and 107. The Cyno-383 levels are shown for days 0, 7, 14, 22, 29, 36, 43, 50, 57, 64, 71, 78, 83, 92, 99, and 107.

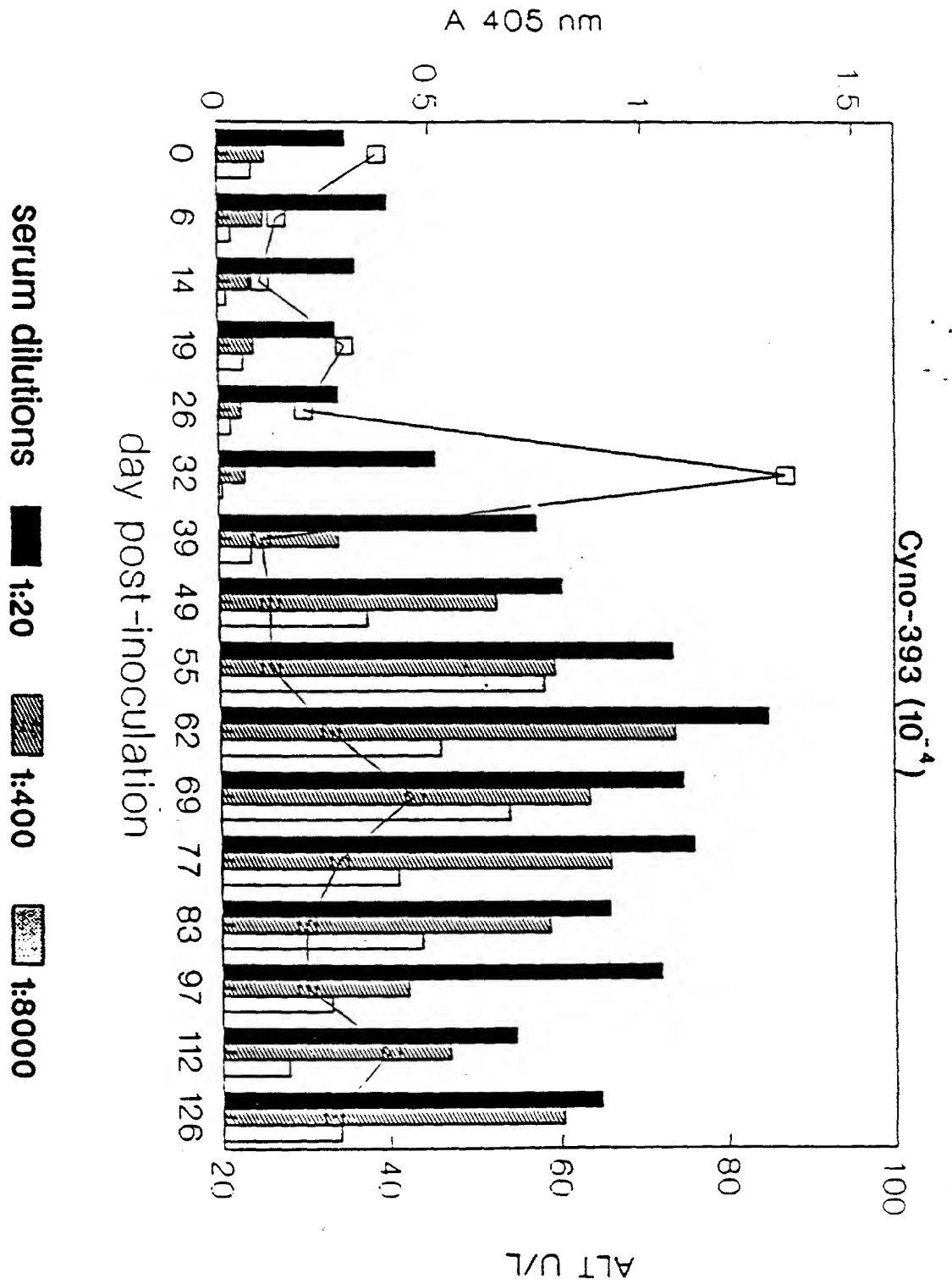


Figure 6H

Figure 6H shows the ALT activity (U/L) and A 405 nm values for Cyno-393 (10⁴) over 126 days post-inoculation. The ALT activity (U/L) is shown on the left y-axis (20 to 100) and the A 405 nm values are shown on the right y-axis (0 to 1.5). The serum dilutions are 1:20 (solid black), 1:400 (hatched), and 1:8000 (white). The ALT activity (U/L) is generally low, with a peak around day 32. The A 405 nm values are generally low, with a peak around day 32.

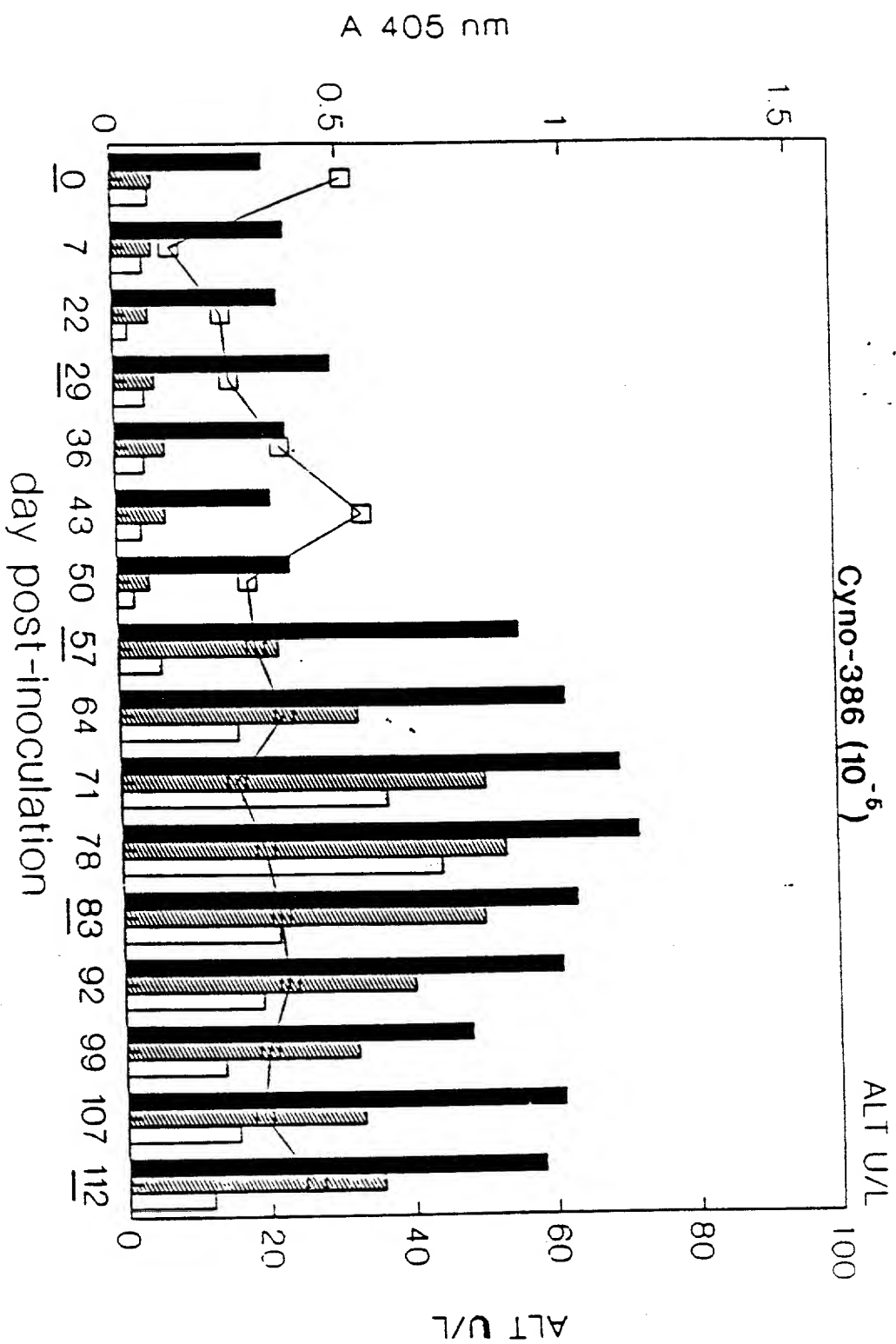


Figure 61

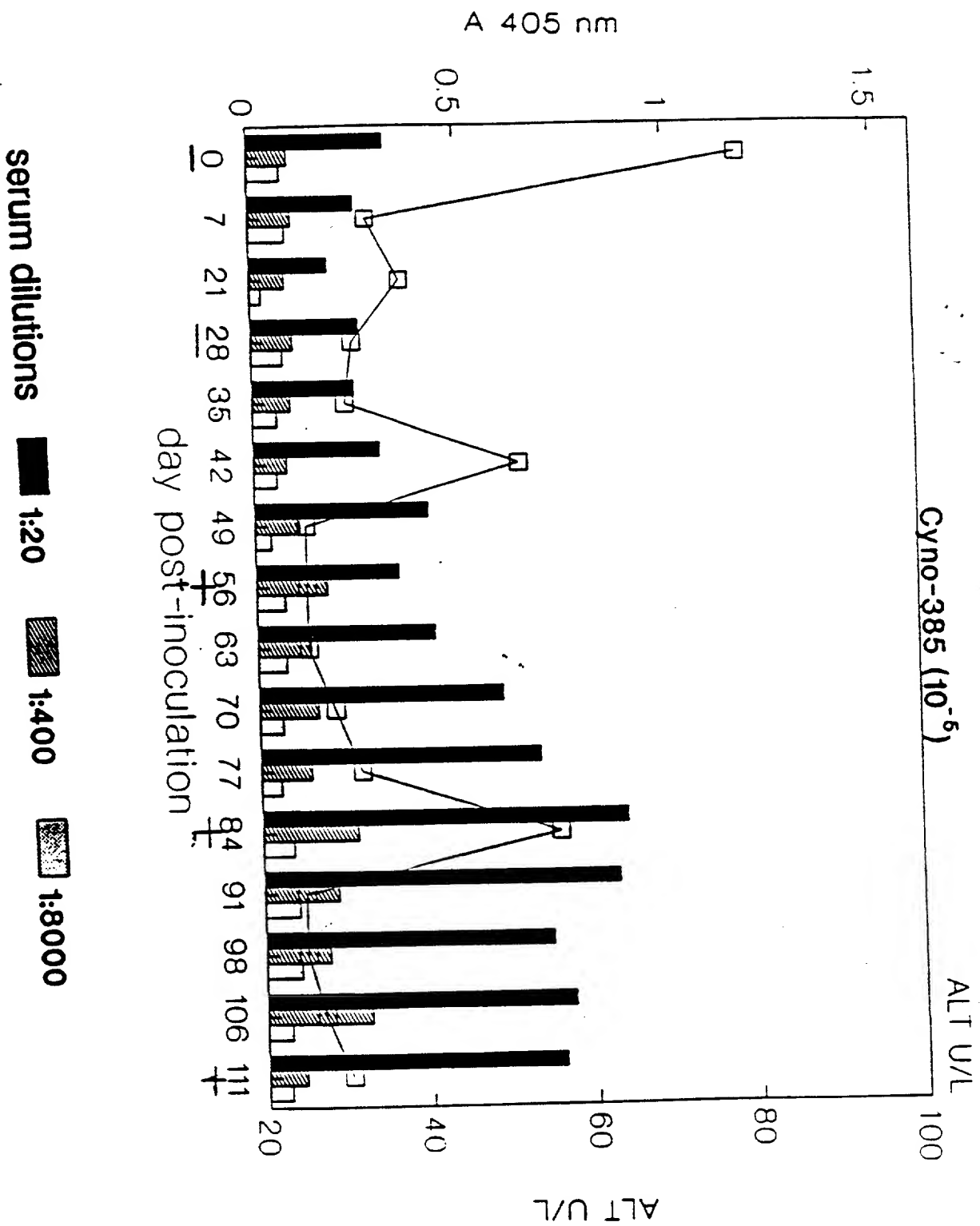


Figure 6J

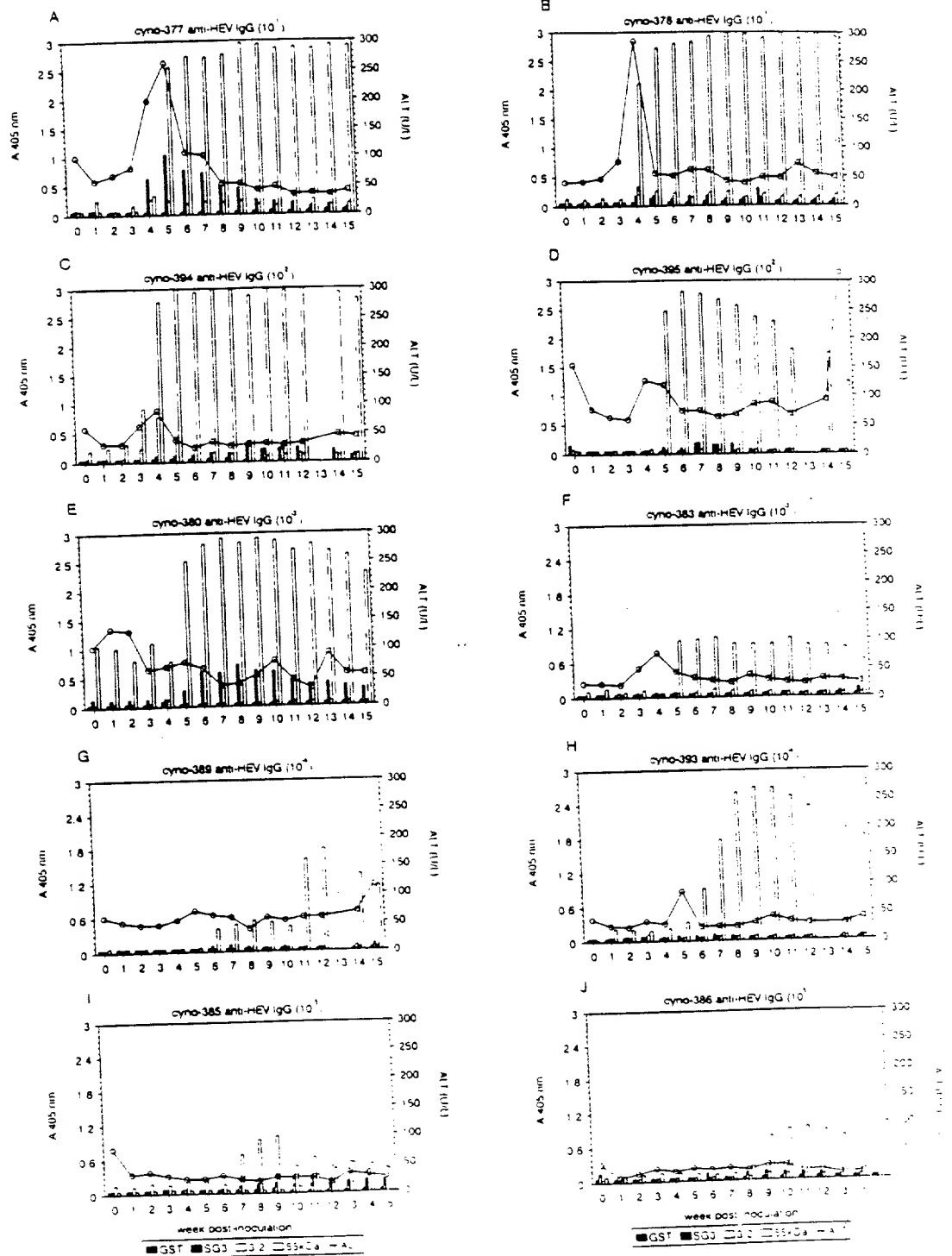
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FIGURE 8

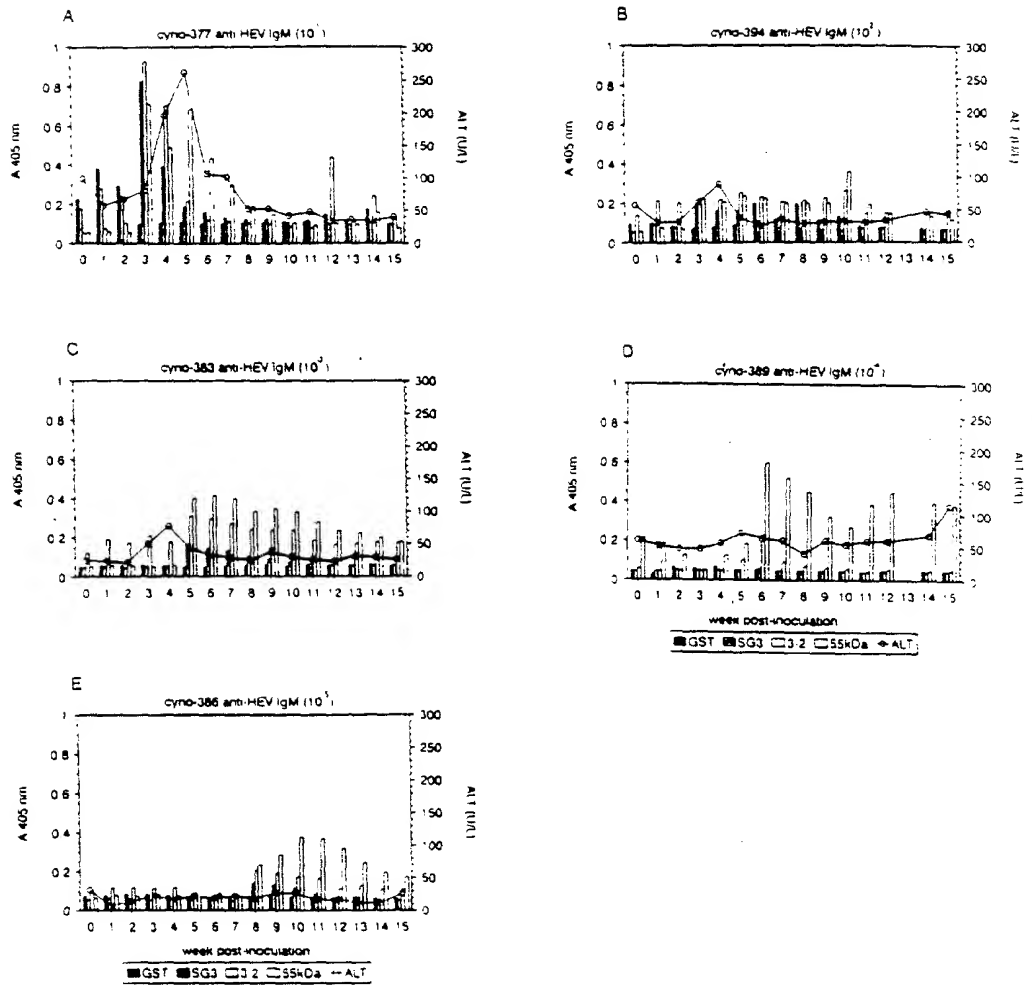


Figure 9

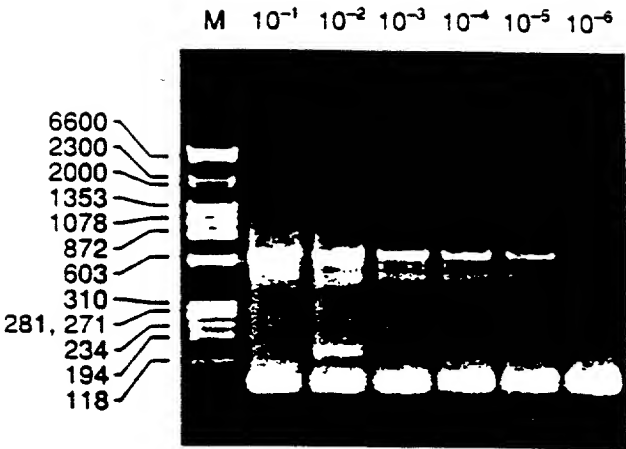


Figure 10

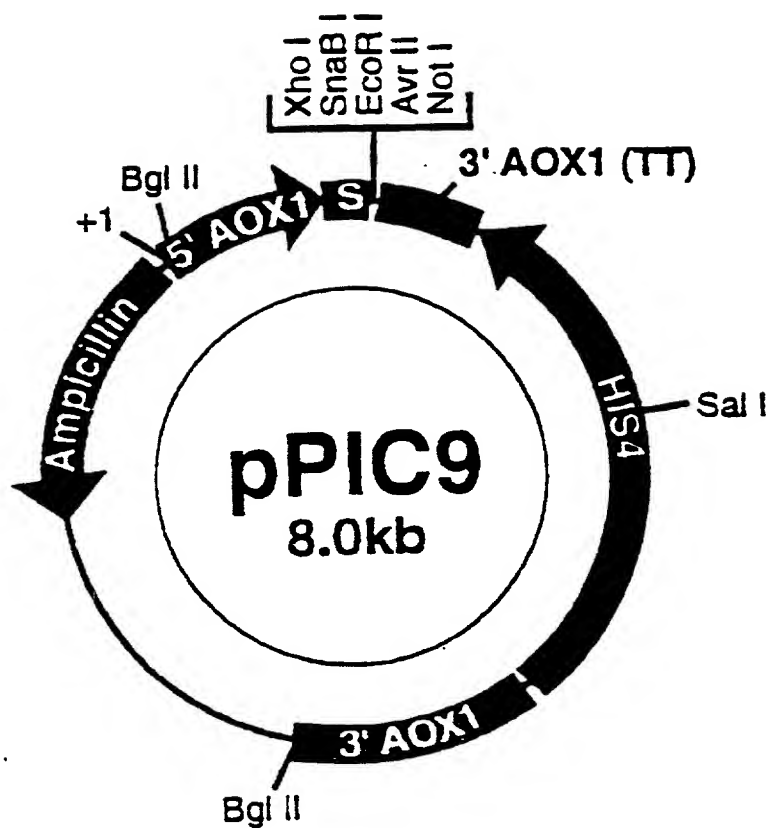


FIGURE 11

HEV GENOME

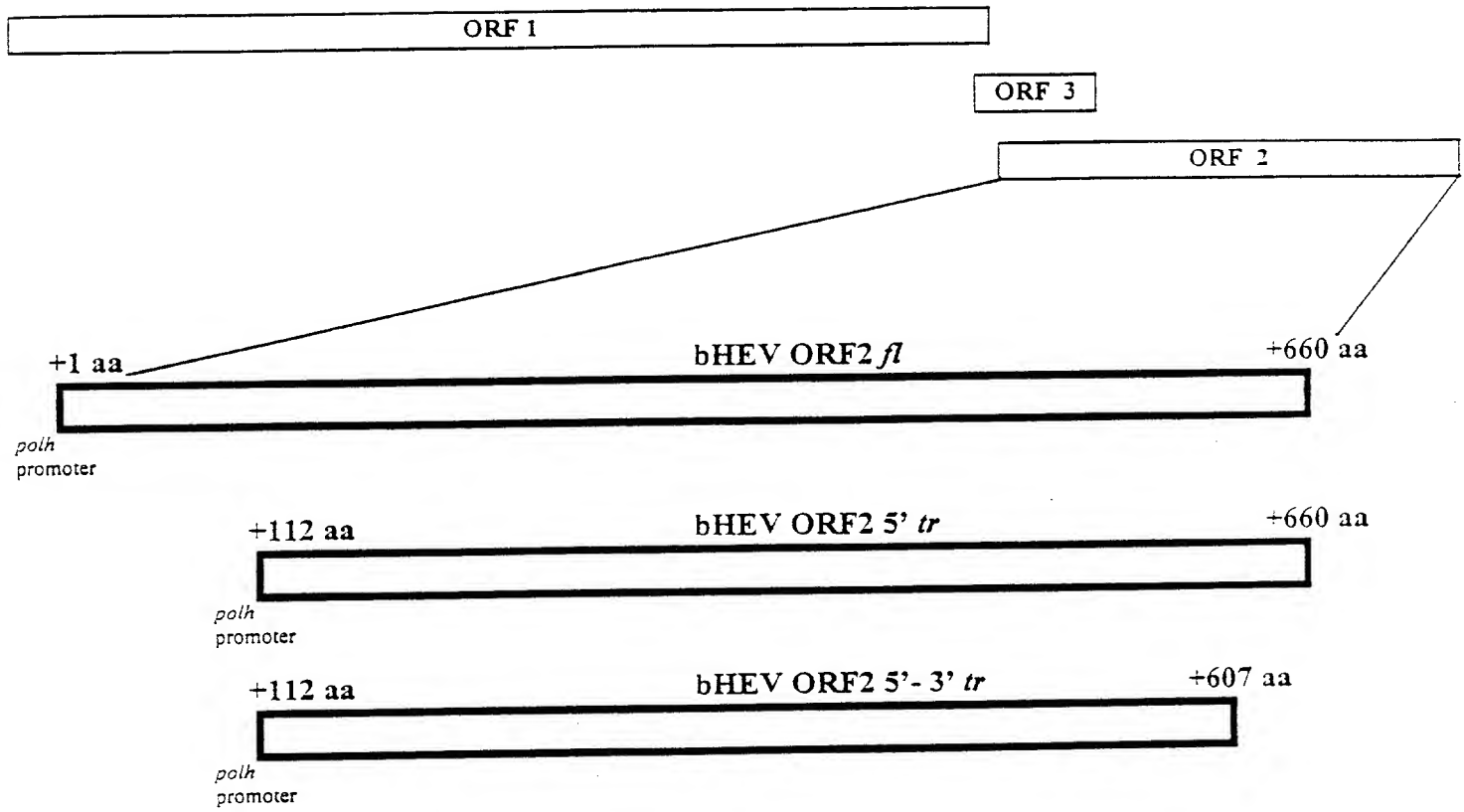
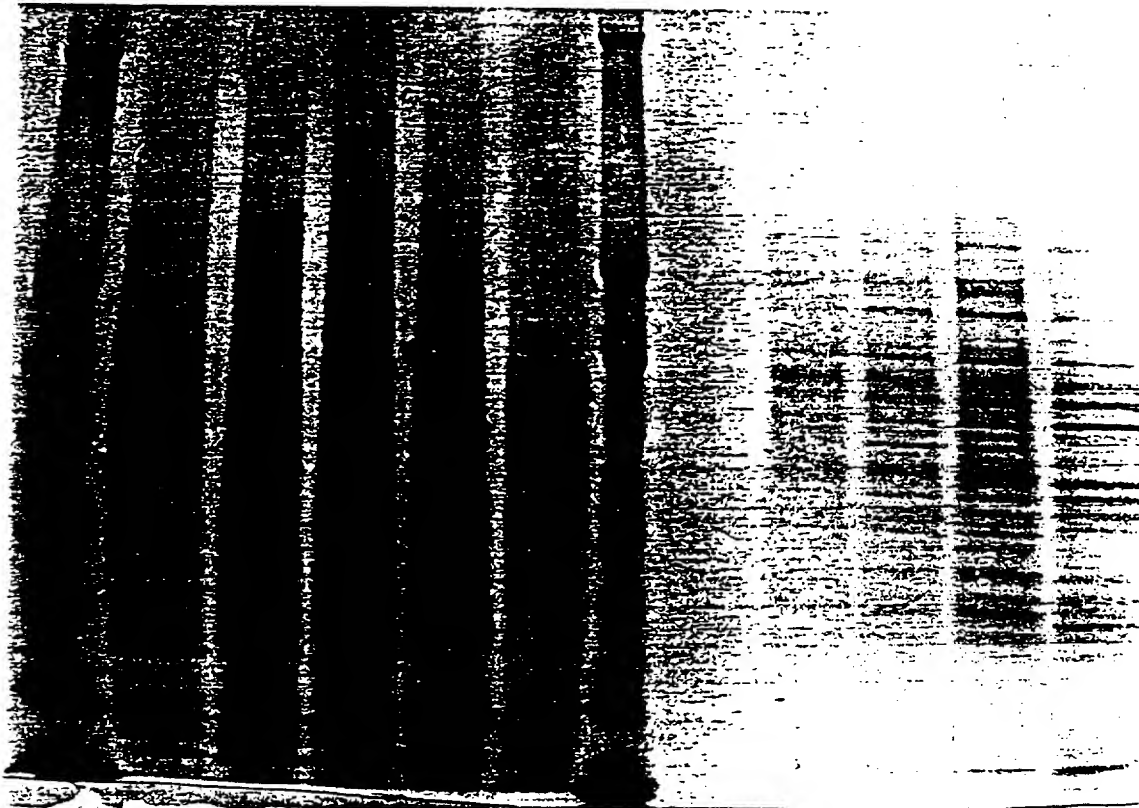


FIGURE 12A

A

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



B

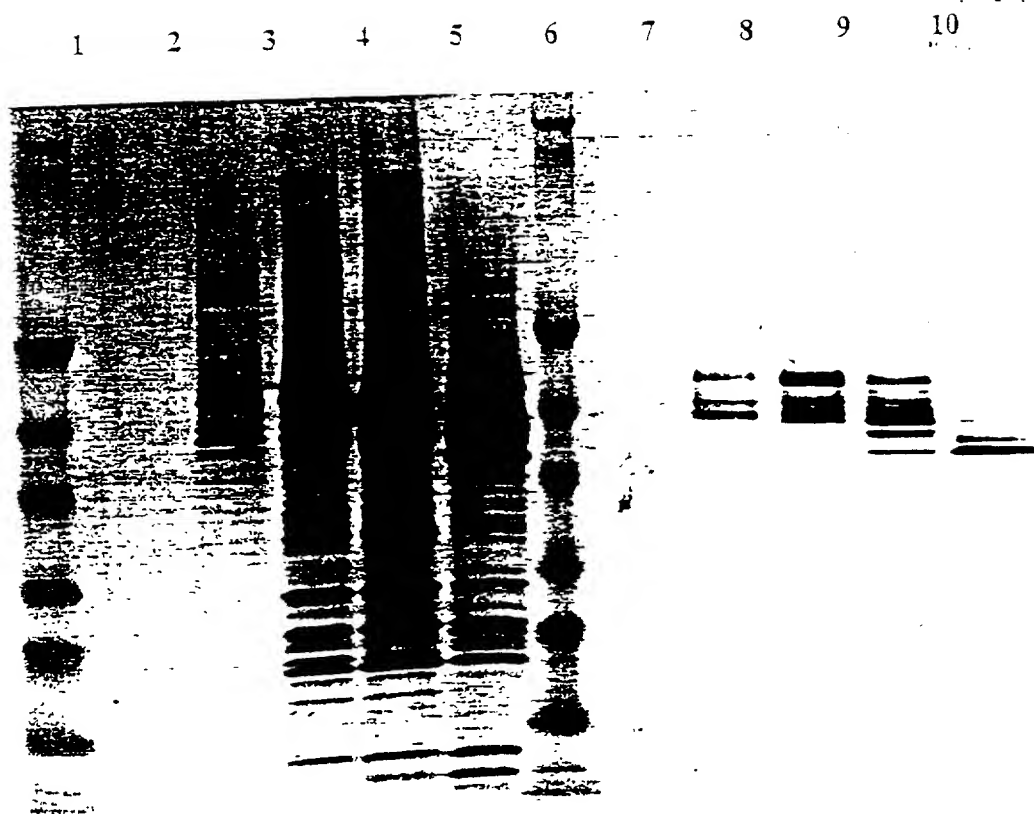


FIGURE 13A

A

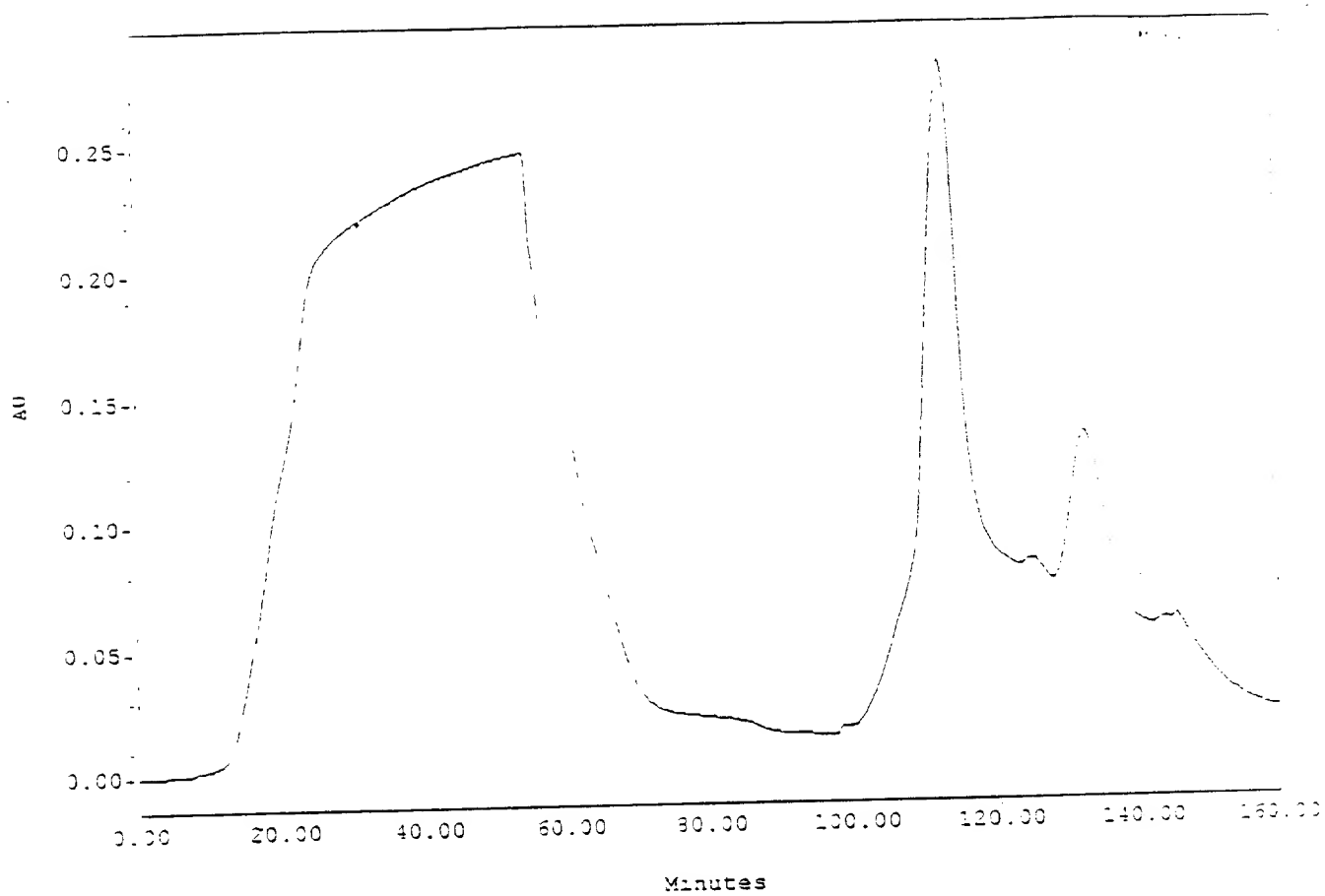


FIGURE 13B

B

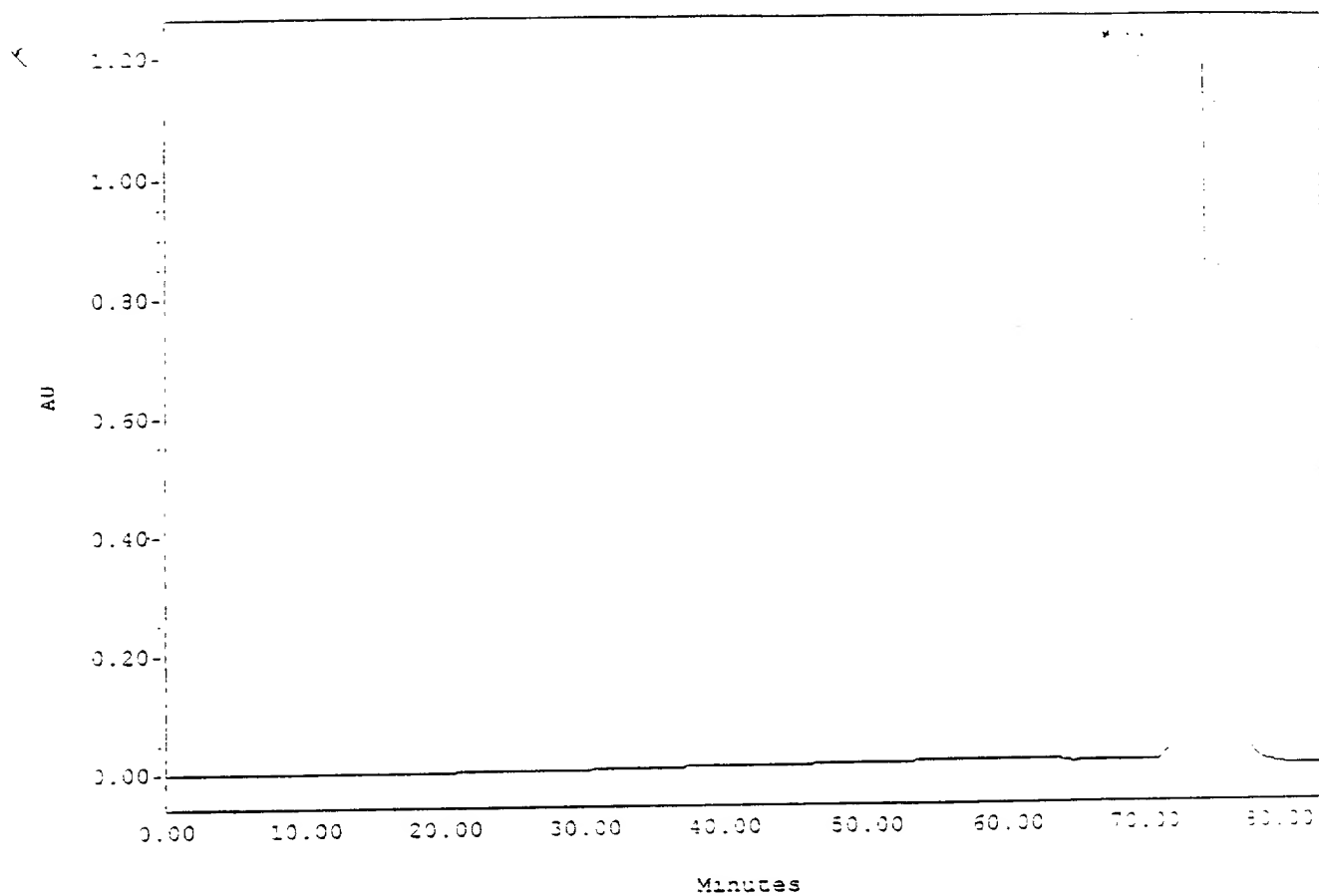


FIGURE 13C

C

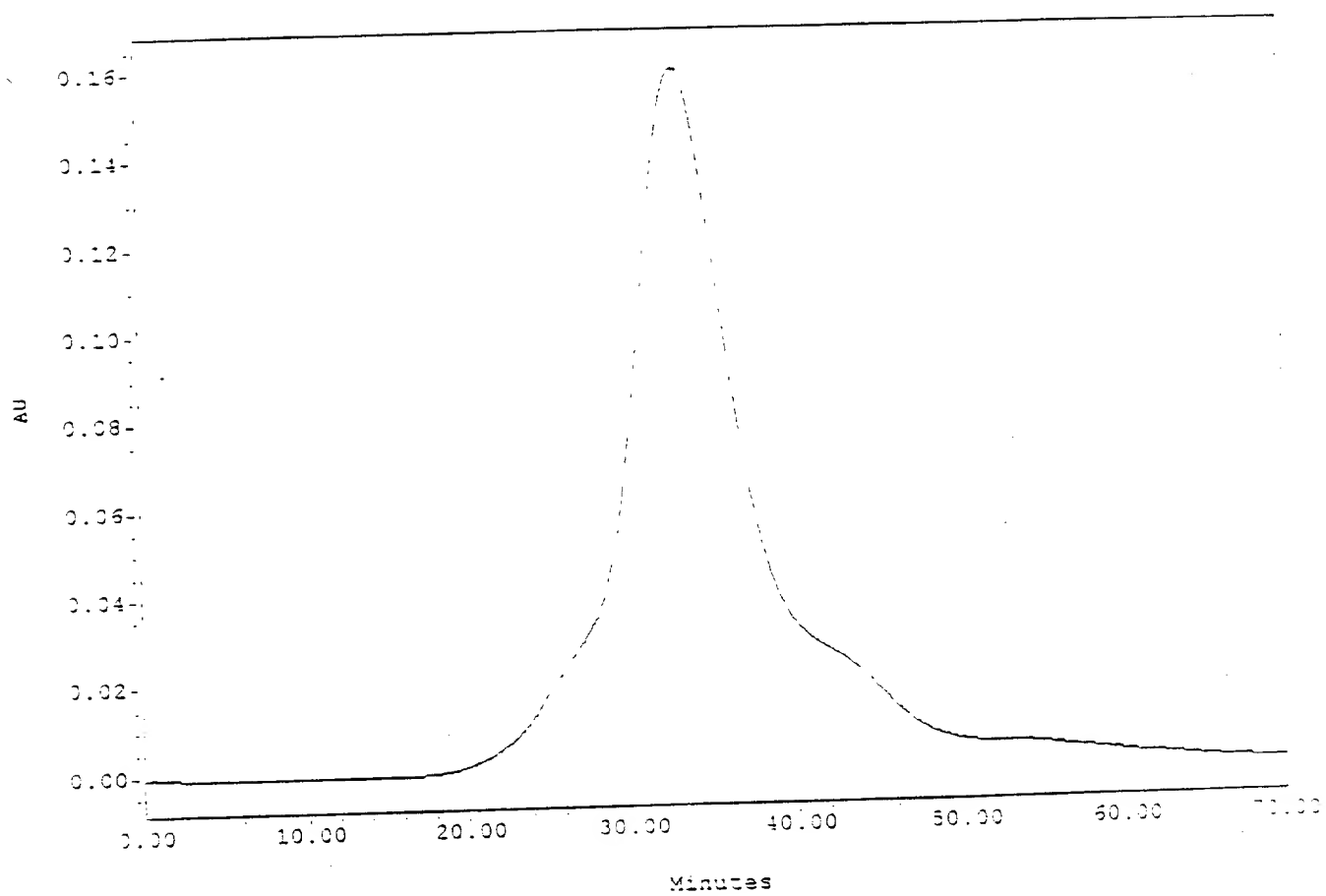
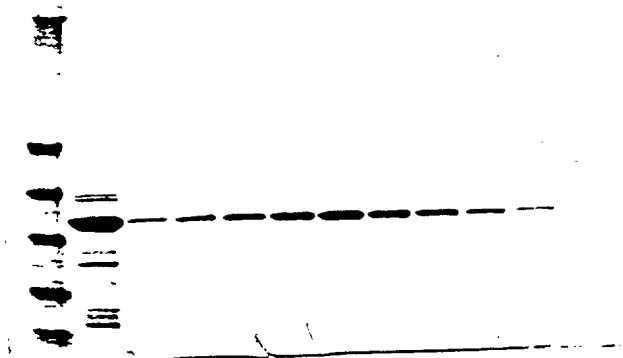
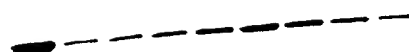


FIGURE 14

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12



α -HEV

FIGURE 15

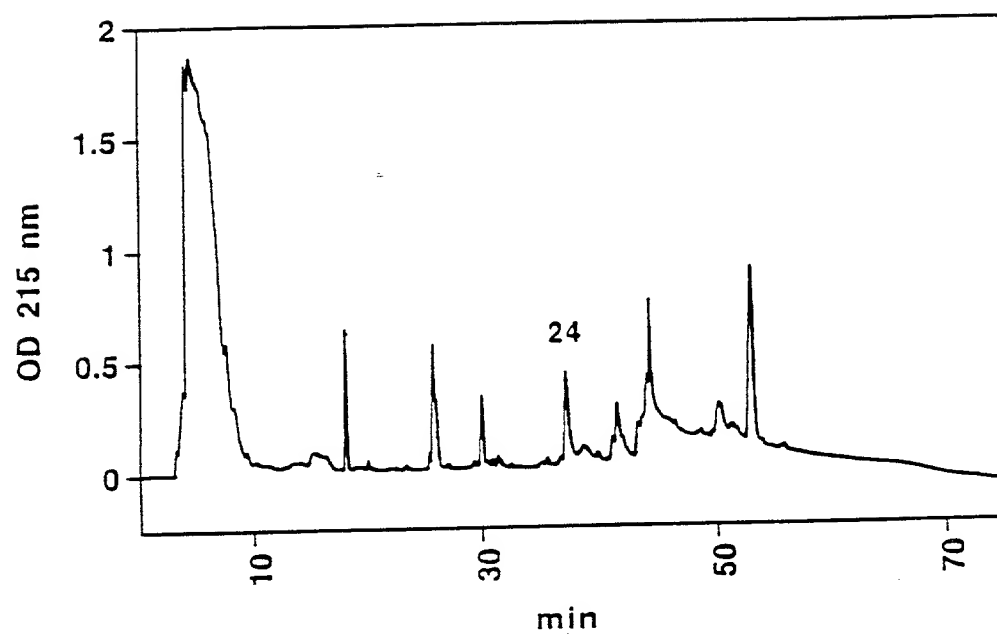


FIGURE 16

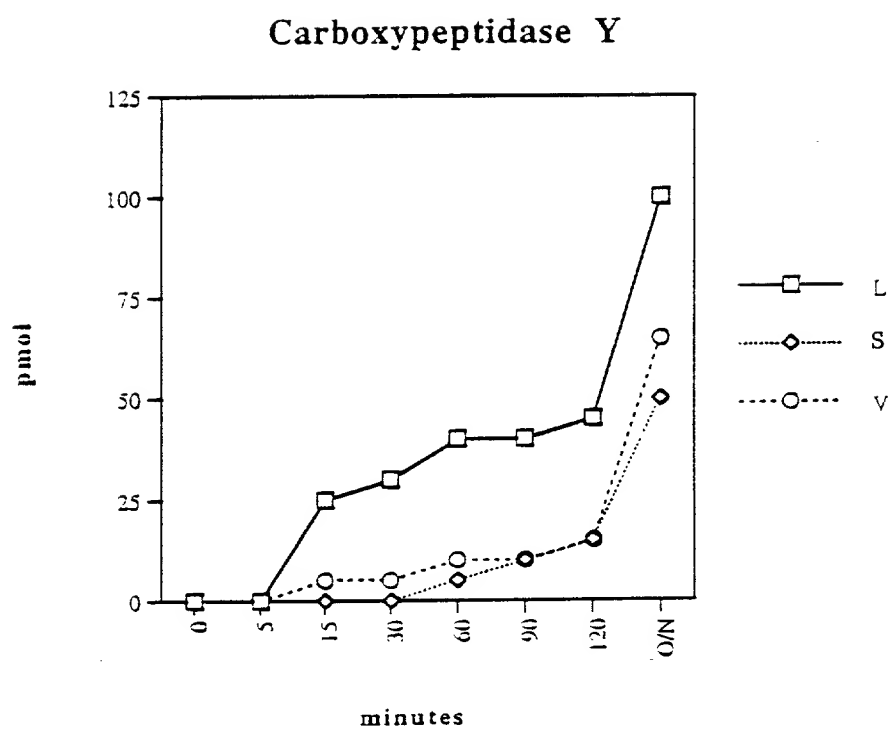


FIGURE 17

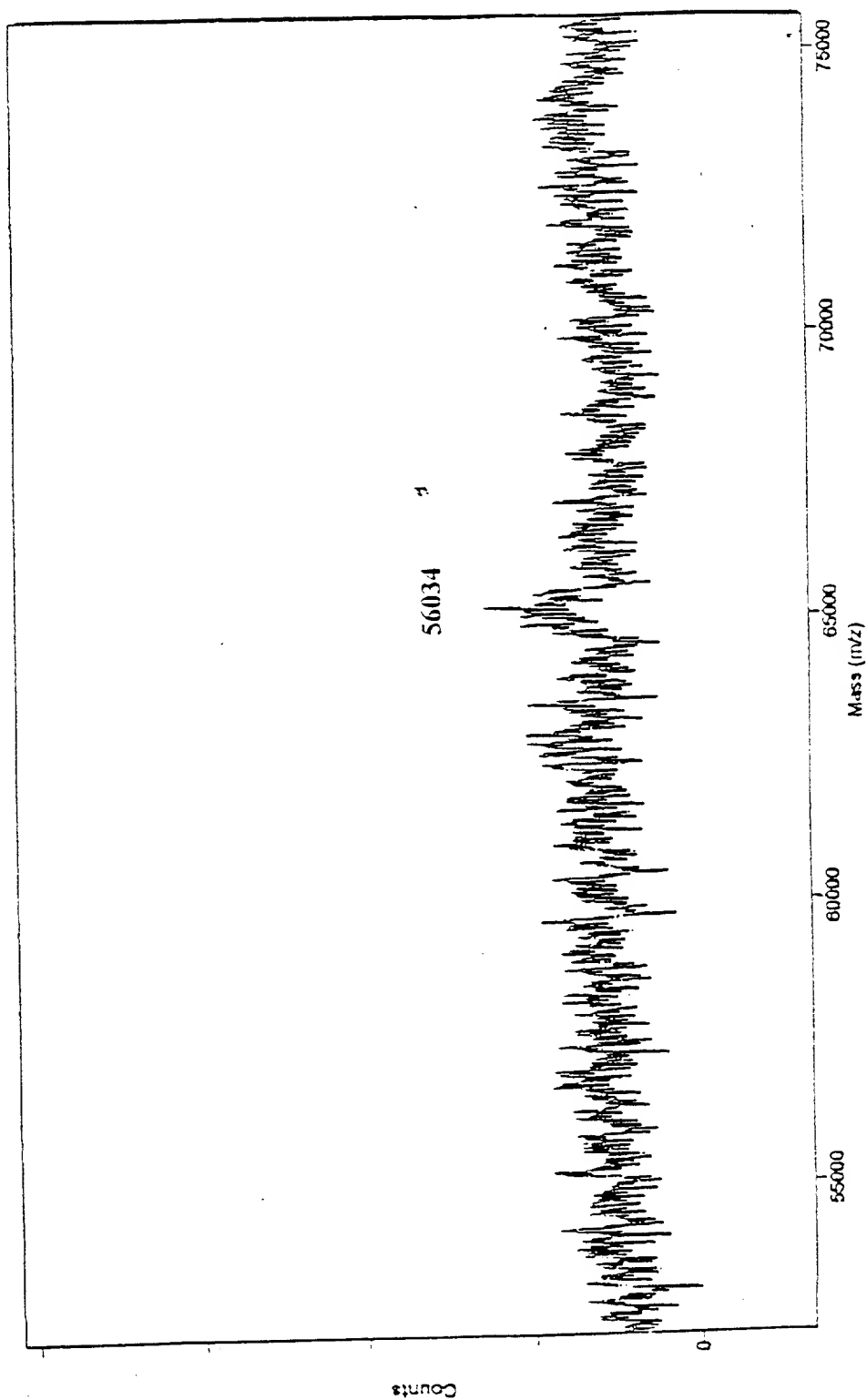


FIGURE 18A

A

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

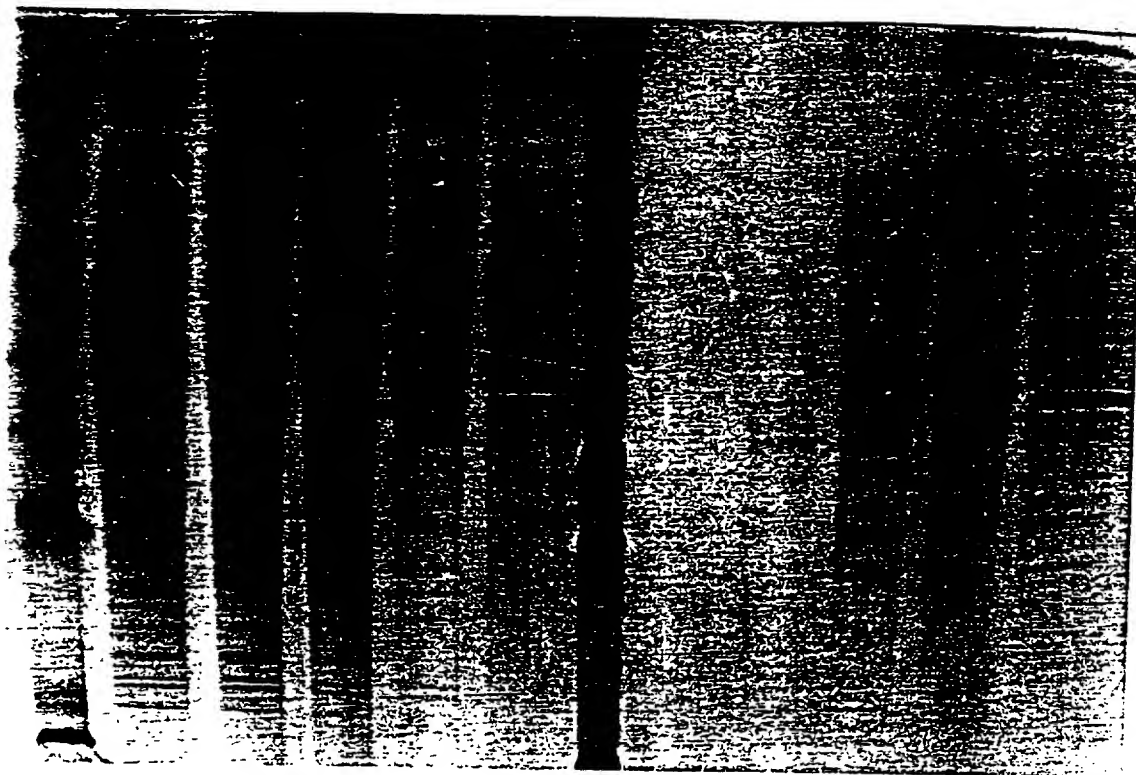


FIGURE 18B

B

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

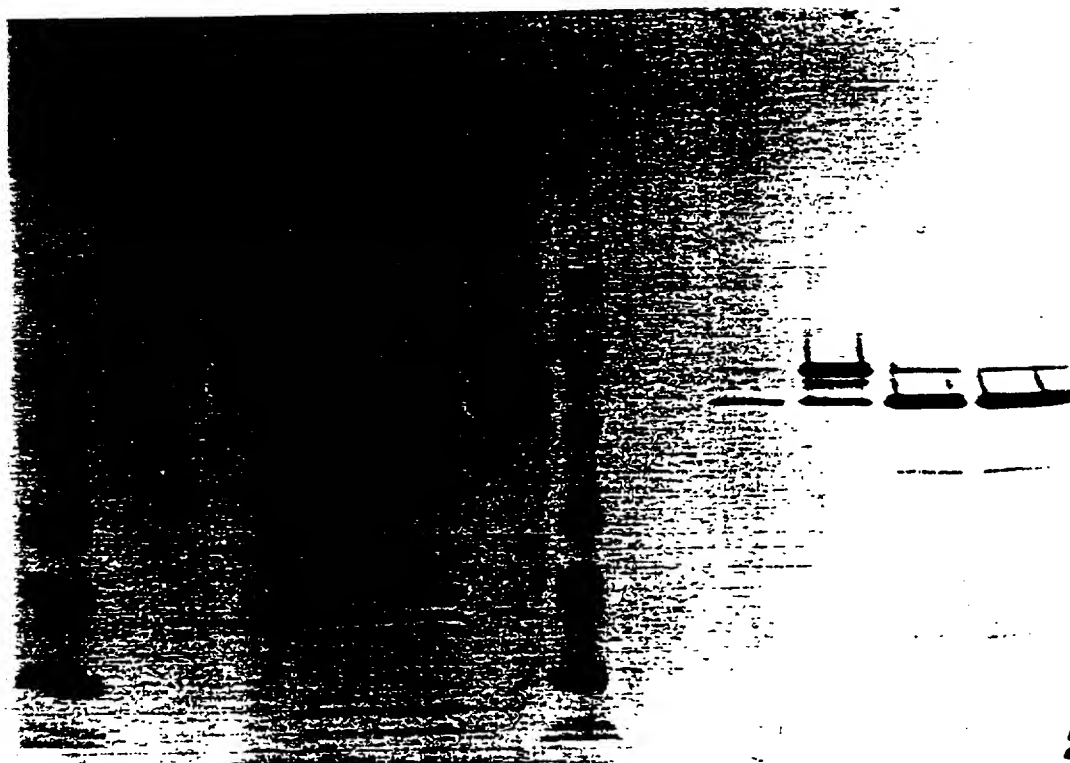


FIGURE 18C

C

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

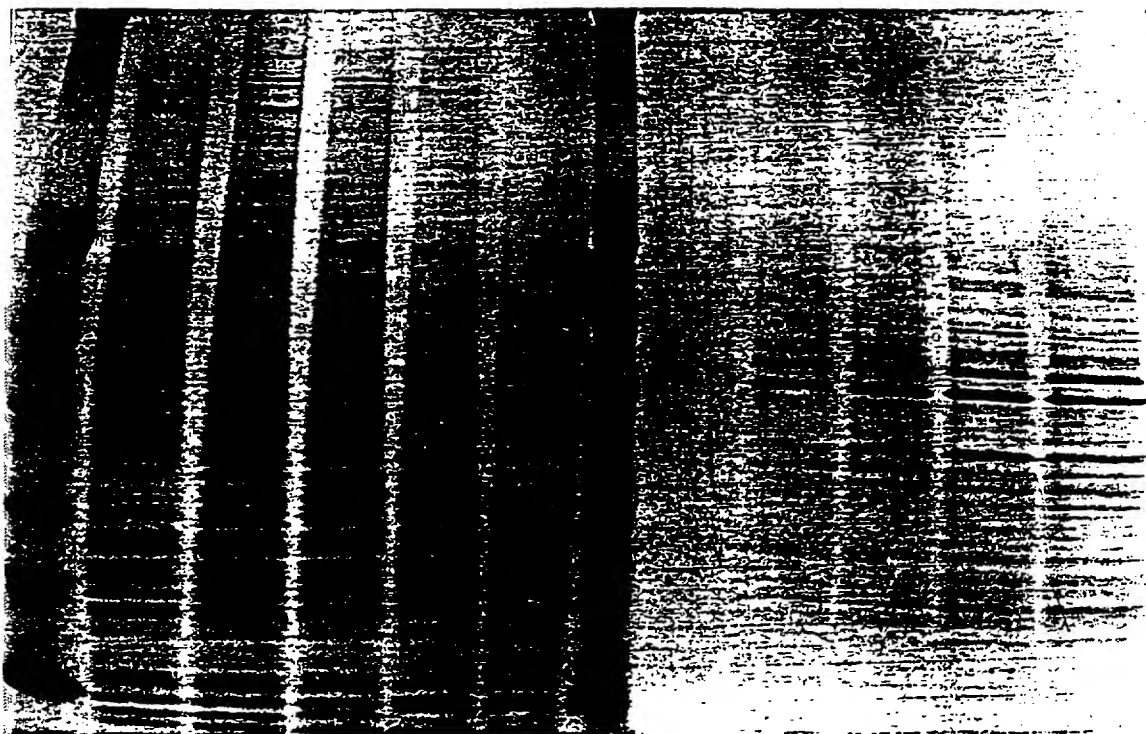
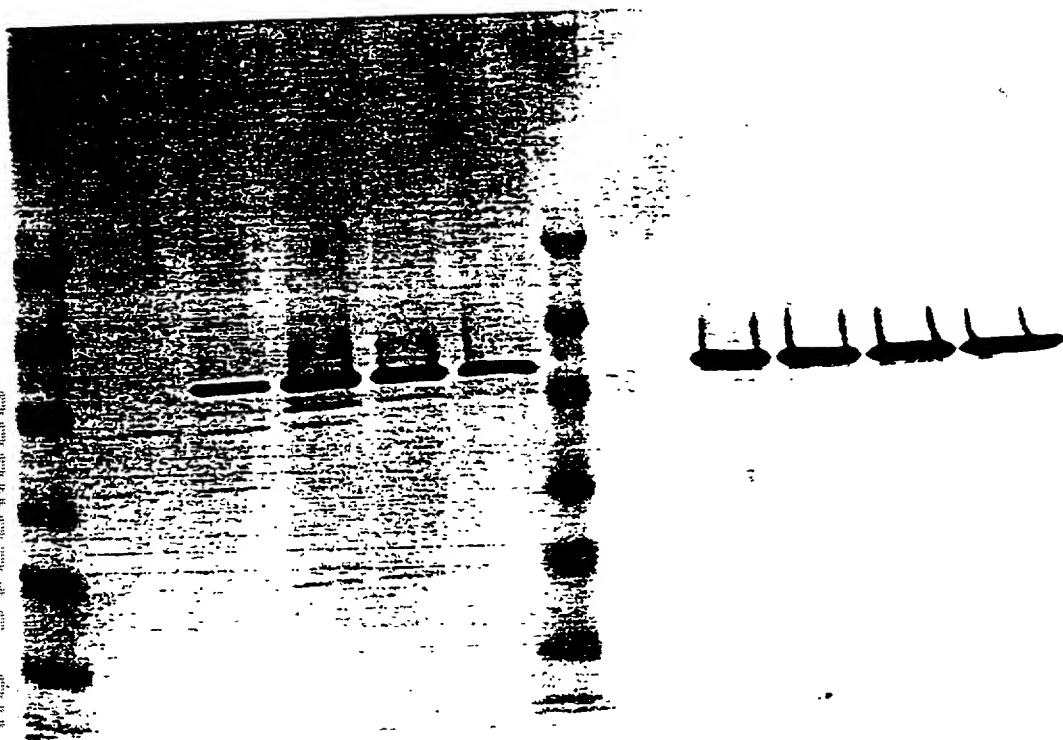


FIGURE 18D

D

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



COMBINED DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that my residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name, the information given herein is true, that I believe I am the original, first and sole (if only one name is listed below) or an or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled: RECOMBINANT PROTEINS OF A PAKISTANI STRAIN OF HEPATITIS E AND THEIR USE IN DIAGNOSTIC METHODS AND VACCINES

which is described in:
 [X] the attached application or

[] PCT International Application No. _____ filed _____
 [] the specification in application Serial No. _____ filed _____
 (if applicable) and amended on _____

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose all information known to me which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56 (a).

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35 United States Code, § 119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate or of any PCT international application(s) designating at least one country other than the United States of America listed below and have also identified below any foreign applications(s) for patent or inventor's certificate or any PCT international applications(s) designating at least one country other than the United States of America filed by me on the same subject matter having a filing date before that of the application(s) of which priority is claimed.

COUNTRY	APPLICATION	DATE OF FILING (day, month, year)	PRIORITY CLAIMED UNDER 35 USC § 119
			[] Yes [] No
			[] Yes [] No
			[] Yes [] No

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code §120 of any United States application(s) or PCT International application(s) designating the United States of America that is/are listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in that/those prior application(s) in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, §112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a) which occurred between the filing date of the prior application(s) and the national or PCT international filing date of this application.

Application Serial No.	Filing Date	Status: patented, pending, abandoned

I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) and/or agent(s) to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith:

James C. Haight, Reg. No. 25,588; Gloria Richmond, Reg. No. 30,416; Robert Benson, Reg. No. 33,612; Jack Spiegel, Reg. No. 34,477; Laurence J. Hyman, Reg. No. 35,551; Susan S. Rucker, Reg. No. 35,762; David R. Sadowski, Reg. No. 32,808; Steven M. Ferguson, Reg. No. 38,448; Stephen L. Finley, Reg. No. 36,357; John P. Kim, Reg. No. 38,514 and Larry M. Tiffany, Reg. No. 40,844 all of the Office of Technology Transfer, National Institutes of Health, Box 13, 6011 Executive Boulevard, Suite 325, Rockville, Maryland 20852.

I further direct that all correspondence concerning this application be directed to:

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National Institutes of Health
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Rockville, MD 20852
Telephone: (301) 496-7056
Fax: (301) 402-0220

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code, and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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Inventor's signature: _____ Date: _____

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Post Office Address: _____

Full Name of fourth joint inventor: Robin A. Robinson

Inventor's signature: _____ Date: _____

Country of Citizenship: U.S.A.

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Post Office Address: _____

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